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THE SPHINX IN AUBREY PARISH.

THE SPHINX
IN
AUBREY PARISH

A NOVEL

BY

N. H. CHAMBERLAIN

Author of "The Autobiography of a New England Farm House."

BOSTON
CUPPLES AND HURD

The Algonquin Press

1889

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO MY MEMORIES.

THE AUTHOR.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ARCHDEACON.

THE Archdeacon rang his bell. In due time a servant appeared.

“Tell Mr. Ardenne I wish to speak with him.”

The servant bowed and retired. The Archdeacon turned to the papers on his table. He shall remain there until the brief account which this history demands is given. Archdeacon Ardenne inhabits one of those comfortable recluse English houses, which for a couple of hundred years or so have looked across the Cathedral Close at Chester upon the venerable Minster which pious hands have built over St. Werburgh's shrine. He has been, for some time now, one of the Cathedral clergy. More than this, he is a Cambridge man, and fifty-six; an imposing, stalwart Englishman, in clerical dress, but with a certain curt, decisive, military air, that befits him as one of a race of warriors.

The long rows of ancient-looking books in white parchment with Latin titles, the shelves filled with monotonous reaches of grim and heavily leathered

volumes of old divinity, with his exquisite edition of the Fathers, show the tone of his exact and sturdy scholarship. The elaborate bronzes on the mantel tell us that he is rich. The stray pens, with perchance a vagrant inkstand hidden behind the mantel vases, and the piles of irregularly sorted pamphlets upon the heavy Brussels carpet, declare the bachelor. And he writes at his table by the sober daylight entering between the heavy drapery of the green velvet curtains, while his favorite terrier lies before the right comfortable lazy blaze of the coal fire, asleep.

A young man stood beside the Archdeacon at his writing.

"You sent for me just now, sir?"

The Archdeacon rose from his chair and laid his hand familiarly upon his shoulder.

"Ah yes, Fred, I tell you something. You are to inform the precentor before night that on Easter morning he is to sing, as the anthem, from Handel's Messiah, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' You know the music. Another thing. Downham is sick, and Lloyd has gone down to see his father who is dying. Robson declines for reasons. You are to preach the Easter sermon.

"I, Uncle? You are quizzing me."

"Not at all. Listen. I have spoken to the Bishop, and he has seen fit to order it. You are too good a Churchman to rebel against authority.

It is settled that you preach. I give you a word of advice. You know what Easter Sunday in the Cathedral is. It is your opportunity. I advise you to improve it. You have four days for preparation. If you miss your mark, I shall blush in my stall for your mother's son."

The young man seemed to meditate upon the Archdeacon's proposition, but he finally answered quietly, "I will preach then, Uncle."

"I give you another piece of advice, very privately, Fred. I have never thought that a lady's drawing-room was just the place to court theology. I suggest that this week you eschew our neighbor Helen De Vere."

The young man blushed to his temples, but said nothing.

"It may be very pleasant work, you think," the Archdeacon continued, "studying a little divinity — and I confess Miss De Vere is one, — but I am going to befriend the sermon. Turn monk and keep your cell till after Easter. Now go and tell the precentor."

The young man went without a word. The Archdeacon returned to his writing, and the terrier slept on before the fire.

CHAPTER II.

THE REV. FREDERIC ARDENNE.

THE young man told the precentor. He found him conning over some music in the choir room.

“Ah yes,” said the old man; “I have been expecting that message, and everything is ready. The Archdeacon has had that music every Easter for ten years now. Good as it is, I wonder he never changes it. I suggested it once, but he ended the matter by saying: ‘Bentley, I hope we are to have that music as men have their wives, as long as we both shall live.’” There was one little thing that the precentor did not know about the brief gray man who ordered it. One Easter Sunday, years ago, the Archdeacon had heard that anthem with a young girl sitting beside him in the pew — for that day only — who before another Easter had white flowers laid around her face; and ever since, at the great feast of immortality, he had somehow heard in that music the tones of her voice, and felt the sunshine of a presence which no grave could hide. The precentor went on with his work. It may be as well to take a look at the young man who brought the message.

Frederic Ardenne is a man hard upon thirty years old, of a Cheshire family whose men for generations had served their king as soldiers, under diverse skies, with that loyalty which an English soldier shows. He himself had been bred for the Church. His father, whom he had never known, died at Salamanca, when, at sunset, the Saxon shouts that rang through those Spanish vineyards, reddened and trampled under the angry feet of stalwart foemen, told of the great victory won ; and they found the sword in the cold hand of Col. Ardenne as he lay among his men under the pure stars which looked down on the dead heroes. The son from childhood bore in his heart the proud memories of such a sire, and had read with tears the words that men had placed in the nave of the cathedral as epitaph : —

HIS RACE WAS ONE OF SOLDIERS ;
AMONG SOLDIERS HE LIVED — AMONG THEM HE DIED ;
A SOLDIER FALLING WHERE NUMBERS FELL WITH HIM,
IN A FOREIGN LAND.

YET THERE DIED NONE MORE GENEROUS,
MORE DARING, MORE GIFTED, MORE RELIGIOUS.

ON HIS EARLY GRAVE
FELL THE TEARS OF STERN AND HARDY MEN,
AS HIS HAD FALLEN ON THE GRAVE OF OTHERS.

His mother died with the sword stroke that slew her husband. The orphan became as the Archdeacon's son. From the day when he had been brought

by his nurse to the latter's study, a chubby infant in white dress with blue ribbons, till the time when he came back from the University a prizeman and a deacon, with the promise of a brilliant future, his uncle had provided in all his affairs with a right fatherly solicitude. He seemed to be impressed with the thought that, somehow, his own life was to perpetuate itself in his nephew, and looked to him to be rescued from his years, and his name from the grave that lay at the end of them. Besides, in certain subtle ways he was rekindling youth in his own heart, from the fresh, ingenuous ways of the young man whom he overwatched. They were, therefore, by an organic necessity, fast friends.

At the time when our story begins, the young man was a priest in orders, who, without holding any fixed appointment among the Cathedral clergy, had, through the kindness of his uncle, been entrusted with several minor affairs in its service, which, while they gave him insight into his future work, might in time answer as stepping-stones to something better. His scholarship grew among the Archdeacon's books, and under the Cathedral shadows those churchly thoughts deepened in his heart, which, when set at the centre of one's life, make it buoyant with a great hope. Otherwise, he is a middle-sized, gentlemanly Saxon, with brown hair and eyes, a gentle, retiring manner,

veiling a reserved strength and earnestness which are the sufficient promise of his future.

The Archdeacon had given his nephew his order and his advice. The order was obeyed. Ten minutes after he left the precentor, however, his feet were on the steps of that same Helen De Vere's house, against whose fascinations, for this week at least, the Archdeacon had so affectionately warned him.

"I wish to see Miss Helen," he said to the servant who ushered him into the hall.

"Miss De Vere is out, but left word she would be back in half an hour."

"Very well, then, I will wait;" and he went into the library.

It must be evident by this time to the most stolid reader that they two are lovers. And yet that one short phrase, "I love you," which, when spoken out of a heart, makes so often another's rich with a great peace and joy, so that this world rises forever after with a new light and benediction on it, and sometimes are those final words which put as it were a vast and silent sea between two lives for that one instant so close together, had never been spoken between them.

It was one time when the young man had come home in the first flush of his Rugby school-days, to spend Christmas, that they met. A little merry child, with a round face ruddy with the Christmas

frost, driving hoop on the walk of the Cathedral Close, had quite without intent driven herself and hoop bolt into the arms of the circumspect and stately youth who happened to be out that morning, in Rugby costume, upon his travels.

“Whose child are you?” said the youth, as he righted to their true equilibrium both the hoop and its blushing owner.

“I am Helen De Vere, and I live in the great house yonder.”

Such had been their introduction. Their families were friends and neighbors. Hers consisted of a maiden aunt, Miss Hannah De Vere, a rather stately lady, who always reminded the child of the good queens she had read about in the story books, and who, truth to say, busied herself in no other task than that of a most painful and conscientious care of the child's wants and wishes; and her uncle and guardian, Sir Chauncey De Vere, an absentee for the most part in the Parisian cafés, of whom we shall hear more anon. It very naturally happened that the young people became friends. When Frederic came from school or college, and it was dull at the Archdeacon's, he came to learn somehow that there was sunshine at the De Vere's. Helen grew to regard him as a very elegant, tall man, who told her famous stories of things in the great world or read her fairy tales or the stories of King Arthur's Table. If she had been asked what love was, she

could have answered no more wisely than if she had been questioned as to what the æther was ; and yet somehow deep down in the child's heart an unrecognized sentiment some day had planted itself as silently as the flowers grow in the spring earth. Frederic thought of her as a sunny-hearted child, very pleasant to listen to and to be happy with, as grown boys are happy with open-hearted, merry girls. It had gone on so for years. And as it happens every year that the spring germs unfold themselves under June skies into summer flowers, so it came to pass that half unconsciously to both the lilies of a first love sprang up and opened their blossoms without a sound. If Helen asked herself why she counted the weeks to Frederic's vacation so sedulously, she never favored herself with the plain answer. If Frederic ever inquired why the long Christmas evenings seemed so short, and the coal fire so ruddy, and the very night so bright at the De Vere's when the rain and the snow were outside, and he sat and chatted with the young girl about his college or their friends, while Miss Hannah looked up from her worsted now and then at the two children with no more dread command to Helen than to be careful about tiring herself with too much talk, he too, escaped putting before his own heart the exact answer.

The truth came to him at last on this wise. Helen De Vere had fallen dangerously sick one

Easter, and the physicians consulted ominously. It drew a very black cloud for him over the Easter holidays. It muffled the Easter anthems to a dirge and made the Easter festivals to mock his fearful and heavy heart. And thenceforth rose in his soul the consciousness that he loved the child, loved her as he thought with a love that would outlast the very skies over him and her. Helen recovered. Did the favorite flowers he sent her tell her? Did the eager eyes and the grateful words which greeted her when for the first time she came down stairs and lay on the lounge in the library, and Miss Hannah stood sentinel over them when Frederic Ardenne came in with her aunt's permission? In that hour when herself was revealed to her she became a woman. And yet *one* word was never spoken, though they from henceforth knew each other. As ivy that twines itself about the oak is silent, so noiselessly did the tendrils of Helen's love twine themselves around the life of Frederic Ardenne.

With a light, airy, girlish step and the rustle of silk in the hall Helen De Vere entered the library. Frederic Ardenne rose to meet her.

"How did you know I was here, my child," he asked.

"I saw your hat in the hall and I was expecting you to-day."

"Me! Why?"

“Oh, because you come here, you know, and you promised to read to me this week. And you have been away two days already.”

“I have been very busy with the service, and this is the most solemn Passion Week.”

“I know it,” she said, more soberly; “and yet I have waited for you. It is selfish, I know, but I am glad you have come. The sun has not shone this week and it is very lonely in the house. But tell me what you have been doing.”

While Helen De Vere is laying aside her shawl and hat by the light of the fire in the grate we will study her a little. It is a face almost brunette, with regular features, and just now aglow with the fresh air of her evening walk, and animate perhaps with Mr. Ardenne's presence; the free, open, generous, trusting face of young girlhood. The dark hazel eyes, round, full, and dreamy, like deep fountains under the long eyelashes, are full of gentleness and pathos, as is the wont of sensitive womanhood. The brown hair smooth over the white forehead, the petite, girlish figure, the exquisitely moulded little hands, a certain delicacy and tremulousness of the clear-cut mouth, joined to a gentle and sensitive habit of hiding herself away as it were from strangers or aught that jars upon her sensitive and modulated nature, are the sure signs of the one fact about her, that she is born a lady.

"As now you have folded your shawl in an exact square and laid your hat in the very centre, according to Miss Hannah's education, you will perhaps talk to me a little," said Mr. Ardenne, after he had for some time watched her exemplary patience in laying aside the aforesaid apparel upon the table.

"Indeed, sir. That is a new fashion. It is you who are to talk to me. Is that so very difficult for you?"

"Not very difficult. What am I to say?"

"Whatever you choose. Nothing or anything. Why should you ask me to tell you?"

"Are you a good listener?"

"Sometimes, if the story be good. But I asked you something."

"What was it, my child?"

"If you have forgot, I think it was something about the Archdeacon's terrier. Nothing very important, I am sure."

"No, Helen, I have not forgot. I was only trying your kind heart," said the repentant man, as he came across the room and seated himself by Helen's side, with the certain air of a man who knows his place. "You ask what I have been doing. Well, then, I have been arranging the Easter presents for the choir boys; hearing them rehearse their music; taught the charity scholars about Passion Week; said service, and been very

busy. But why don't you ask me what I am going to do?"

"What, sir, are you going to do?"

"That is what I came here to tell you," and he leaned in his earnest way towards her. "Our good bishop, since others have failed him, has commanded me to preach at Easter. Is not that news for you, that I, Frederic Ardenne, am to preach in the Cathedral?"

"I am very glad to hear it."

"Why?"

"For your sake, sir."

"Why for my sake?"

"Because," and here the young girl hesitated, as though something forbade her to go on.

"Because why, my child?"

"Because, then, if it is right for me to say it, I am sure you will do well. You have been at the University, you know, and have the learning, and it will make you friends. You want friends, don't you? Besides, it is so pleasant to have one's friend preach in the Cathedral choir,—one hopes so much, is so anxious, is so glad when he does well,—I can't say exactly why. It is wrong perhaps, but I am ambitious for my friends, though I have few friends, and most of them are women. Is your sermon written?"

"It is you, then, who are ambitious. You should be a soldier. Soldiers are captains and grow to

emperors. But in the Church we are only standard bearers and soldiers always under one captain. For such as I am, my child, there is only service," the young man said half sadly.

"And yet," she went on, "there are different qualities of the service you speak of. That which is done in the Church should be well done in honor of Him who is the Best. I am sure I wish you to do the best. Is that wrong?"

"Possibly not. You may be sure, my child, I shall do the best I can for my Master's sake and your sake too."

"I certainly wish it. Is the sermon written?"

"Not one word. That reminds me. The Arch-deacon gave me strict in charge to become a monk and keep my cell till it was written."

"Are you sure it is quite right, then, for you to be here?" the young girl asked anxiously. "What if you should fail? Somehow I should blame myself."

"And thereby sin against yourself. I shall not fail. I came here to see you an hour and then go away to the writing. You know I tell you that you affect me like one of Mozart's anthems."

"I am not musical, sir."

"Not exactly; and yet the cause of music in others, my child."

"I can't teach my aunt music, sir. I have tried it; and she never sings above the third note

in the scale, though she gets through the service tolerably. But you must go now and write your sermon."

"Very well, then, after Easter I shall see you again."

"Yes, and read to me the 'In Memoriam,' as you promised. But one thing I forgot to tell you: Aunt has letters that Sir Chauncey will be here at Easter."

"Sir Chauncey De Vere! He has been gone these five years and hates England. I should have as soon looked for Notre Dame crossing the channel as he. What is he coming for?"

"I really do not know. Business, Aunt thinks. His rooms have been prepared to-day."

Why was it that the mention of Sir Chauncey's coming threw a gloom, as of anticipated evil, over both Helen and the young man beside her? He was her uncle and certainly not his enemy. The two men had hardly met, and yet even her heart foreboded some, as yet, unshaped evil. Was it that the good angel who kept watch and ward over so pure a heart, looking into it and into the great world outside it, saw enemies arraying themselves against its peace, to wither a mighty hope born in that stainless life of hers? Was it the strong angel of a man's work and wrestle, who began to sound through his life the low and muffled notes of a most bitter sorrow, and moved now the heart of Frederic

Ardenne with the name of a man almost unknown to him !

O Good Angels, of whatever watch and ward,—whose protecting wings skyward are ever bright in the blaze of an unsetting sun, but earthward cast sometimes the shadows of your presence for the warning of those you shelter,—as much as in you lies, and under the rule of Him who is so strong, cover away from storm and night these two lives now given to your charge, for His sake who is the Life, and suffered once for all !

“So, then, Sir Chauncey De Vere comes here at Easter,” the young man said slowly, as if he felt but could not measure an impending danger. “Well, at any rate, come with me, my child, to the hall door as usual.”

She followed him without a word. He turned to her as he opened the door. “Pardon me ; I was tired when I came here and have been but miserable company. And yet I could not stay away.”

“I have nothing to pardon, sir.”

The young man bent down, and gravely signed with his finger upon the willing and wonted forehead the sign of the cross.

“Pax tecum,” he said.

And a low voice answered gently, “Et cum spiritu tuo.”

Frederic Ardenne passed out and into the night,

and there were no stars above him for the clouds.
And the night that was to shroud his heart for
many weary years had no stars for the clouds.
And yet, for him, for us, for all who suffer, above
the clouds are the stars that sing and shine for ever
and ever !

CHAPTER III.

SIR CHAUNCEY DE VERE.

SIR CHAUNCEY DE VERE came home on Good Friday ; but Sir Chauncey had denied Good Friday all his life. The solemn Sacrifice it commemorated had been, so far he was concerned, in vain. His career for half a century had mocked the cross and refused the life from it. His heart, harder than Jew, Turk, infidel, or heretic, wasted to ashes, by a life of elegant blasphemies against itself and God, no longer asked or allowed the pure flame of religion and love to be rekindled by any altar on any day. Truth to say, Sir Chauncey, living all his life in a Christian realm, was a profound heathen, and not a very clean one at that.

He had been born to wealth and a position. His only ambition in life had been to spend the one to degrade the other, and in that career his had been a great success. If there had been in his heart in his younger days, as indeed there were, any pure thoughts or manly wishes, he had delved down and dug them out. If either man, woman, or church by accident had written some holy

legend on his heart, he had erased it. His was the faith that kept the promise of his own perdition ; his the power that wrought it.

Sir Chauncey was a man of the world. He had its polish, its craft, its coldness, its balance, its selfishness, its remorseless will, its elegant drapery cloaking foul things ; but he lacked that love and generous self-denial, with a certain unclouded rectitude of soul, which this world can neither give nor take away. He had lived nearly all his life in the clubs and the cafés, and his estimate of human nature had been made on no more generous premises. His idea of women was such as fitted them to be the comrades of the men he had met. Of anything better in his race he had no conception. And yet Sir Chauncey assumed the common manners of a gentleman. He paid his bets and his servants scrupulously. In his younger days he had been in the army, and fought well enough, under the inspiration of that animal steadiness under mere physical danger which passes current for courage in so many men. He was versed in the manners of the companies he had kept, and had long been an authority in all those questions of mere worldly honor which men are wont to decide without honor. His portly visage, redolent of half a century of good cheer, and radiant with half the vintages of Europe, was the diploma he carried about with him to the illustrious fact

that he had lived to make himself a sewer for meats and drinks for more than a generation. He had spent his own and the fruits of other men's lives upon his pleasures ; and yet had never lifted his hand to make any richer or happier. He was now fifty-six ; and in all those years he had not learned anything which good men care to know, but had known many things which all wise men make haste to forget.

Sir Chauncey was welcomed home in due form to his house in the Cathedral Close. His affectionate greetings of his kinsfolk may be imagined. As for the servants, there was less laughter below stairs than usual. Their master never kept Lent, but somehow Lent was always more strictly kept when he was home. The first thing he did after he had seen his trunks in their places was to visit the stables ; next to order minutely a very unlenten dinner ; then he devoted himself to his friends.

So the De Veres kept Lent. Miss Hannah De Vere, his sister, from whom he had lived apart nearly all his life, regarded Sir Chauncey with a very profound apprehension. How far her fear was kin to her dislike, it is not necessary here to say. Helen showed her sense of her uncle by a silence that but thinly disguised her fear of him. She shrunk away as Beauty might hide from the Beast. Sir Chauncey was not exacting of affection. He made himself comfortable in his inn.

It is not in point to speak of all the little matters which perplexed folks above and below stairs on his return. It is only as he affects the destiny of the young people whom we have met together that he or his is of importance to any one. What came to those two came thus. Sir Chauncey had two mental habits: the habit of a tyrant, as all men without conscience have, and the habit of a marplot in all matters that were likely to make folks happy, such as only men like him are not ashamed to have. Helen De Vere's happiness furnished a new field for his genius, as in old times they say the saints provoked the chatter and gibes of envious demons. He had come home to look after her a little. Somehow an instinct from some quarter of his unclean soul advised him to take a journey back to England to look after his brother's child. She might be too happy. Sir Chauncey, better than he knew, was to reduce her back to the vale of tears. His angel (there are two sorts, we know) laid in his honest way Helen's Prayer Book. In it was writ her name, and "from her friend, Frederic Ardenne." Sir Chauncey hunted the trail, as he had hunted foxes, vigorously; and had not long to wait for the "Halloo." He called the butler.

"Who is Frederic Ardenne, John?"

"A young clergyman, living with the Arch-deacon — his nephew, I think, sir."

"Does he often come here?"

"Sometimes."

"Was he here this week?"

"I think he was."

"Don't you know he was? And hasn't he been here every week and several times a week for a twelvemonth? Come now. People who eat my bread must out with the truth. How often does he come here?"

"I can't exactly say, but he is often here, sir."

"That will do. You may go down." And the butler went down.

"Sir Chauncey is after somebody this time," he said to his friends down stairs; "I hope no harm will come to Miss Helen."

Then Sir Chauncey sent for his sister.

"What does all this mean?" he said, when, somewhat flustered at his mode of summoning her, she made her appearance.

"What mean, brother?"

"What? why all this nonsense about Helen."

Miss Hannah knew at once from what quarter the wind blew, and wisely said nothing.

"Don't you intend to answer?"

"Certainly, when I know about what I am to answer."

"Well, then, I come home and I find this child, your niece, with a follower, a young parson and poor at that, and you allow it. I left her with you

to look after. And here you are with an engagement on your hands, for aught I know. When is the wedding? Or perhaps you don't fancy making me your confidant? Eh?" And he laughed a laugh out of his throat, such as men like him laugh when they are not particularly happy.

Miss Hannah weighed her words before she spoke. "If you mean Mr. Ardenne, he is our neighbor and our friend, and he comes here. He is a very pleasant young person and Helen and he read together sometimes. His family are very respectable, you know, and he visits people in the Close, and is a clergyman. I don't see anything wrong in his coming. There is certainly no engagement, and I don't know that anything has ever passed between them more than between young people generally."

"That is the way with all you women. You are all softs; when you have an affair on hand, especially if there is a parson in the basket. This thing must stop. If you can't take care of your niece, I will. Remember, this young parson is to stay away. You understand, Helen is not at home to him. You may go now."

Miss Hannah did understand, and she went, and as she went she meditated why it was that God allowed such a man as her brother (for she knew him with a knowledge that was very bitter) the power to meddle with such a poor, innocent child

as her orphan niece. She might as well have asked why God allows the plague or the cholera.

Sir Chauncey was hunting famously. He would drive the game to cover. His temper was grown to be fit for any achievement to which men of his metal could possibly aspire. He sent for Helen, and she came with an ill-defined sense of fear, and yet steadily, to confront her uncle.

"Do you love this parson, Frederic Ardenne, who has written such a sweet dedication in your prayer book?" he said bluntly, as Helen came in and stood before him, as, huge and luminous with the vintages, now roused to his full level of malice, he stood before the mantel.

"I, Uncle?" and her face grew very pale, as the blood rushed back to her heart on which so coarse a blow had been so foully struck; "I, how can you speak to me so?"

"Because I wish to know. Do you love him? Out with it at once."

But Helen made no answer. He had stunned her.

"Do you hear? Do you intend to answer?"

"How shall I answer? How can you ask me, a young girl, such a question? I have no father, and you would not question your daughter in this way, Uncle."

"Thank God, I have no daughter. If I had, I would put her under lock to keep her from making

a fool of herself, falling in love with an idiot like herself. Do you love him?"

"Indeed, I do not know."

Sir Chauncey's words had so paralyzed her woman's nature, that, for the moment, she knew and saw nothing but the man by the mantel who was torturing her.

"That is all very well. I dare say you would know well enough if the man himself were to ask you. Has he ever asked you?" and he laughed his laugh in his throat.

"No, never, Uncle. He has never spoken to me so."

"How would you like to be a poor parson's wife, you, a De Vere, and rich, to live in a hole and eat bread and cheese, and run after all the brats and wretches in the parish, to go to prayer meetings, and have all the tenantry to tea? You would make a nice figure as a parson's wife, you know, and you are strong, and have been bred to hardships, such as eating your dinners and having your bills paid for you by your footman."

"But I have something of my own, Uncle," Helen said, listening more quietly as Sir Chauncey went on with his delightful picture.

"Ah, you have arranged it all, I see; and so has that disinterested friend of yours, Mr. Ardenne. Parsons are perfect hounds on the scent when they are running down a fortune. Their piety

sharpens their nose wonderfully. I never knew one of the pack who wasn't out on the hunt. Your friend shows taste. He will marry the estate, and take the live stock on it as it stands."

The blood came back to her face and a new light was in her eyes as Helen listened to Sir Chauncey's cruel words. She was after all a De Vere, and her blood had been ill bred to brook outrage silently.

"You wrong him, sir, when you think him capable of such motives. Mr. Ardenne is a gentleman and a clergyman, and I am sure always remembers he is that. I would trust his honor anywhere. Besides I think if I loved a man (and the gentle voice grew distinct and steady as she went on) and gave him my hand, I would be glad to give the whole world with it, if I had it."

"Nonsense; that is like a woman, always talking about sacrificing yourselves to what you call your heart. You are all martyrs or wish to be so. But I will allow no ward of mine to get into the clutches of a parson. I hate the whole pack. It is no use arguing with women — they leave off where they started. I will end the matter. This young parson, Frederic Ardenne, or whatever you call him, is not to come here any more. You had better send him his *congè d'elire* at once. Do you hear?"

"I hear all you say."

“But will you obey?”

“I will not disobey you. You are my guardian and are in the place of my father, who was very gentle to me. I am a Churchwoman, and my religion teaches me to submit to superiors and to honor my father and my mother. I will certainly tell Mr. Ardenne that you wish he should not come again. I will submit.”

“Submit! That is not enough. Give the man up. There is no use in disguising matters. It is very clear you love him, no matter what you say. Now just give him up and forget him. He will find a new Juliet among the flats in a fortnight. Promise now, Helen.”

But Helen did not promise. Stunned as she had been by the beginning of this brutal colloquy, her woman's heart had been growing steady under Sir Chauncey's words, and her thoughts were rising up to the level of her woman's nature. As she stood before him, pale, and silent except when obliged to answer, with the sacred shrine of her heart and its love invaded so coarsely by one who should have been her friend,—a child without a parent, yet a woman without guile, with all she most loved and that for which she lived, now to be rudely torn from her,—she became the second time a woman. And then her love for Frederic Ardenne, under their wrong, grew clear and strong, and she felt that she had laid her life in his, to be

no more separated. The blow upon one heart had bound two together in bonds that would not break.

“Will you promise?” the uncle said, as Helen, revolving these things in her mind, stood silently before him. And then she turned her face to Sir Chauncey, firm and calm, with every word distinct, no longer a child before him, but a woman, in that petite, delicate form of hers, and answered.

“I do love Frederic Ardenne with my whole heart; and I shall never change. I have loved him ever since I was a child, and he has been always gentle and true with me, as his heart is, a gentleman’s. When you asked me whether I loved him just now, I told you I did not know. I know now. I love him. I told you, when you commanded it that I would see that he did not come here any more; and I will do it. I will do it because it is right. I will submit to you in all just things, because my Church teaches me obedience. But my Church does not teach me to deny my own heart, and that I never will. I will give up seeing him; I may perhaps never marry him; certainly not against your will. But I love him always, and will be true to him. I do not, and cannot, promise what you wish.” A woman with a heart at bay against Sir Chauncey De Vere! It is a woman that would die for the faith which she has plighted.

Sir Chauncey hesitated a moment, to take counsel of his wisdom. And then he answered coldly,

“Very well. We will arrange the matter. That is all.” And Helen went out.

Sir Chauncey refreshed himself after his labors with a glass of brandy, drunk clear, and then disposed his immaculate and regal body in his arm chair for a nap. What pure and gentle angels must frequent and guard the sleep of so generous a soul as Sir Chauncey De Vere’s!

CHAPTER IV.

EASTER IN THE CATHEDRAL.

MEANWHILE the writing of Frederic Ardenne's sermon went on. First of all, as was fit, he kneeled down and prayed God to give him right words to say in His Son's Church, before the people; for he knew what men of his order very soon learn, how the path to true eloquence lies through the gate of prayer. After that, he wrote over the text, "In the name of God, Amen," and went down to the Archdeacon's library. There he read in the Church Fathers about Easter. And as he read, he was struck, as never before, by the fact of the great importance which all Christian men attached to the due celebration of this royal feast; as that kingly day in the church which governed all the rest. Everywhere, in the decrees of councils, and in the writings of saintly men, the same earnestness for its honor and its observance was manifest. No man who called himself a Christian but kept it. No man for ages was held a Christian who did not keep it. And men celebrated this chief Sunday as they did all Sundays, because the whole Church from time immemorial,

and especially that Church of the apostolic ages which had resisted unto blood for the faith as it is in Jesus, had always kept it as a duty never questioned — as a blessing never to be given up. It was plain to him that the early Christians held Easter to be as truly a part of the Christian economy as Sunday or the sacraments were. They might be right or wrong; but no man could dispute the fact that they so held it.

Then when he had read the Easter lore, Fred-eric went out-doors to meditate. First of all he walked through the ancient town. In the thick English fog of the lowery April day its quaint rows and buildings assumed a more ghostly and ancient look than ever before. "How old it all seems," he thought. Here, without doubt, were those ancient Britons, whose rule had passed away before the Passion of our Lord. Here had been the Twentieth Legion and the feet of all-conquering Rome. And since their time what races, tongues, flamens, priests, soldiers, pardoners, monks, kings, bishops, and hosts of untitled and now forgotten people had lived and passed away from here, and left hardly a trace of themselves upon any building or street of the sombre and silent town. The very dust of the streets were the ashes of the dead. It seemed to him as if all life was Lent time, — a Lenten service of struggle, of waste, of weakness, of decay and dissolution;

and as though Ash Wednesday, the day of ashes as well as the first of the Church's Lent, was in all days, men fared so. Then he went out of the streets through the Close into the Cathedral. It was near the hour of Evening Prayer. He entered through the low archway, and walked along the covered cloisters, where in old times the monks lived. The very stones of the arches had crumbled, and the stone carving of saint or flower had been worn away by time, or mutilated by men of past ages, for whom there was no longer any time. The echo of his own footsteps upon the flagstones were the only sounds that fell upon his ear. He stopped and looked around him. Where were the monks with cowls—the pilgrims from Holy Land, the scribes wan with vigils or the wearisome toil of those illuminated missals which they had writ and embellished with monastic ornament in the service of Mother Church? Where were all the sojourners and laborers, that for a thousand years or more had gathered to this spot in the solemn service of a priestly life, and had now been gathered to their fathers? And neither the worn stones of the dark and crumbled cloisters, nor the vacant niches, nor the silent Cathedral tower above him, nor the curt green grass springing above the dust of a thousand years, in the rectangle of the cloisters, could tell him. It was Lent, he thought, in the very house of God.

He went in to the service. An old woman, leading a little girl, went in just before him, entering His gates who hath made both youth and age to praise Him. They knelt in prayer as they came to their seats, as men have bowed themselves in His sanctuaries during all the ages of the Church. The choir boys and the priests sat in the same stalls that the generations of choristers and prayer-men had filled before them. When the service began, the same confessions were made, the same prayers said, the same lessons read, the same anthems chanted, as had been in use here and elsewhere from time immemorial. It was true that the monks were dead and Chester folk, and there was no light nor voice in the cloister at this evensong, and yet here was a service, a something he saw that was not dead — did not seem to die. They who prayed and they who sung had taken up the one service with the one intent of those who had been and died before them, to furnish forth worship of Eternity. What meant this song? Frederic Ardenne saw that while he had been looking at things about him, the Church service was always pointing to things above him. True, so many men were dead, and here it was Lents and Ash Wednesdays for the best. But the litanies and psalms of a thousand years in the Cathedral had been always lifting men above Lent to Easter, and leading them out from days of ashes,

and from beneath crosses, and from stumbling at grave sides, to the land of the palm and the crown, and the Easter of the white robes and the stainless skies, and the crossless home ; to the life without tears and the pavilions of peace deeper than the seas.

Frederic Ardenne had found his sermon. The one thing eternal in this world, he said to himself, is the Church. And that Bride of Christ standing amongst the graves of the past, and men outwardly of dust and ashes who seem to perish, is the pure and gentle prophetess of a life that cannot perish, of a conquest that is always sure. In the order of the Church's year on earth, Easter follows Lent indeed, but Lent returns with every year. In heaven Easter runs through all the year, and the year is endless.

It was Easter Sunday in the Cathedral. It was also Easter Sunday over the whole earth. It was Easter Sunday for the living. It was Easter Sunday for the dead who died in the Lord. It was a new Easter and yet like all the rest that had been before it, since the Christ who had risen from the dead was the same and the human hearts that wait for Him and His resurrection.

It was an Easter too full of joy for the Cathedral. The very sandstone of its walls seemed saturate with the mellow April sunshine, and the graves under its shadows appeared to wear a more cheerful and happy look. The sons and daughters

of the Church went in to the dark oak seats where so many had come before their time, and the gentry of the shire, of historic name and lineage, came as their fathers had to keep Easter in the Cathedral. The bishop on his throne, part of St. Werburgh's shrine, they say, of a thousand years ago, the singing boys in white and the white-robed priests that read were of a line and ritual very old. The Easter prayers and anthems were holy with the memories of uncounted generations of Church-folk who had prayed and sung there. And when the notes of Handel's majestic anthem, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," rose and swelled with the voice of the great organ, and rolled over the stone tombs of dead abbots laid asleep in the Cathedral choir five centuries ago, and floated and trembled far up among the arches of the nave, and shook the dust from the worn tapestries with their monkish legends wrought by fingers now dust and ashes, and shook the tattered war banners borne on red fields by stout hands of soldiers long since dead — though the dead heard not and the dust moved not in the wasted shouds, it lifted the loving hearts who worshipped in the holy music above the mortal waste and sleep around them to another realm, where are the litanies that have no cry of pain, and the praises of Cherubim and Seraphim who stand with unshut eyes in watch and worship before His throne forever.

Then followed the sermon.

Christ is risen. Yea, He hath risen and appeared to Simon. With such salutations have Christians greeted each other on Easter morning ever since He rose from the dead in triumph. This is the Sabbath of life eternal. This is the queen of feasts—the Easter Sunday of immortality. This is the feast of white robes, and the forty days of Lent have end. Now, with the risen Christ, His Church rises to a new life and hope. All Christian ages celebrate this day with song, psalm, organ, prayer, and sacrament. In ancient days the devout watched its coming in the churches among the lighted candles, and when it came Christian cities at Easter-tide were hung thick with lamps which made the very darkness light. The business of this world ended ; the very courts of justice closed fast against all business except the mercy that would manumit a slave ; prisoners went free, unbound by that love in Him who had unchained all prisoners out of the hands of Death ; and the great feast of love and reconciliation in Christ proceeded. From the first the Church hath gathered about the broken tomb in which the cere-cloths had been laid aside to hear the Risen say “ I am the Resurrection and the Life,” to look through veils into that land where believers are gathered in bliss. It is the one tomb, of all that have ever fretted or burdened the bosom of our Mother Earth, which has no pang or fear in it,

and its light gilds and glorifies every Christian grave. Beside it all Christians hear it said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is a broken tomb that breaks all others for the resurrection. In that tomb the Church has ever found proofs of our Lord's divinity and the foundations of a great hope. A thousand years after the first Easter and Christian crusaders in Palestine woke their camps with their strong war cry, "Remember the Holy Sepulchre." And ever since Christians, wherever scattered over the globe, have called to each other in the great unwearied faith of Christ's-folk "Remember the Holy Sepulchre." How strange that out of the very grave itself proceed tidings of the one sure shadowless, tearless, crossless life. The Catholic faith renews itself forever at a tomb. How wonderful!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ changed the thought of the world touching the most solemn problem, namely, its condition beyond the grave. For it was clear that all men died. For the heathen world the grave was its enemy, its executioner, its merciless, eternal jailer. There was something about the grave that maddened it, that paralyzed it. Other things it saw had choice, but the grave had no choice; it took all — king, queen, peasant and slave alike; woman in the flush of beauty and man in the pride of majesty; the patriarch of untold winters; and the babe whose life was spanned by a single spring. Other things became satiate

and full: the wild beasts of prey rested sometimes from their cruel sport and feast. But the grave had no day of rest, had no pastime, was never satiate, was never full. The very murderers sometimes forewarned their victims, but the grave never spoke before it smote. To antiquity it was the one ghastly pit that received and consumed forever. The best thought of imperial Rome wrote such epitaphs as these upon its tombs by the Appian Way, "While I lived, I lived well. My play is now ended: soon yours will be. Farewell and applaud me." "*Domus æternalis*" — "the eternal home." But the sand-diggers and water-carriers of Rome, believers in the Resurrection, when the Emperor was hunting them down with sword and lion in the arena, laid their dead away in the Catacombs, and, in the darkness made visible by flickering torches, graved with a rude hand pious mottoes of faith over the sleepers, such as these "*Vitalis: buried on Saturday, the kalends of August. She lived twenty-five years and three months. In Christ the first and the last.*" "*Valeria sleeps in peace.*" Often of a man: "He sleeps in the peace of the Lord;" or this of a child, "You have already begun to be among the innocent ones;" and of another child: "Taken away by the angels on the 7th Ides of January." When heathen law allowed them to bury Christians openly, their grave-yards were called "places of sleep."

These "places of sleep" were outside the city's walls and near some travelled road, as the heathen ever, in order that travellers coming into the pomp and circumstance of a living city, might first pass through the city of the dead, to be reminded of their own mortality. The heathen buried their dead at night; the Christians in the sunlight; the one buried their dead with wailings; the others with sacred song and psalm.

Observe a Christian funeral of the third century. It is a company in white. The bearers, dressed in white, bear out the body, also clad in white. They bring no flowers in their hands to crown the dead, since, as one of them has told us, "We do not make fading crowns for ourselves, but expect a crown of everlasting flowers from God." Perhaps they have just come out of a church, where they had watched the body during the night, and the Holy Eucharist has just been celebrated. It is morning time; yet the procession gleams with torches whose flames signify life. Then they sing such words as these: "For precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath rewarded thee." "The memory of the just shall be blessed." "The souls of the just are in the hands of the Lord." "I will fear no evil, because thou art with me." Thus they moved slowly outside the city to the grave, where they would give the body,

not as the heathen did, to the flame, but to the more gentle embrace of that earth which would hold it in its bosom till the Judgment. No tears mingled with the chanted psalms, since those Christians were taught to think death liberation from care, the beginning of Paradise. At the grave the heathen sometimes opened the eyes of the dead that they might take a last look at earth and sky ; but the shut eyes of the Christians remained unopened, since the dead in their sleep beheld more beautiful than earthly things. When they laid the body in the grave, perhaps the priest sprinkled some dust in the form of a cross upon it, as Christians do to-day.

Then they returned home in peace again, and always in their families they spoke of the dead as those who had gone to Jesus, and of their dead children as the lambs which were forever carried in the bosom of the Good Shepherd. Thus death had no pang to the faith, and the grave became the gate to Beautiful House, where the disciple dwelt in perpetual bliss.

It is true also that as the Church became corrupt the grave became dark. In those mediæval ages when all horrors were associated with death, and the skull and the cross-bones took place of the cross and the palm, it was only the heathen darkness rolled back against the light of the Resurrection Morn ; the Broken Tomb sealed up

again against souls orphaned of their risen Lord. Yet even in these days, because the Church could not exist without her Easter, and the hope it gave her, they did not doubt of immortality. The Greek Church, when she placed in gloomy line her robed and mitred bishops in their episcopal chairs,—the Bible open upon their knees, their hand uplifted to give the benediction,—to await the resurrection, testified to the ancient faith. Roman and Anglican in their own way have always done the same; and we heritors of the faith of saints gathered this Easter around Christ's broken tomb take up the old thanksgivings, looking on to the Hereafter in which our Lord reigns in glory.

Easter, therefore, prophesies of Heaven. It proclaims the New Jerusalem of the twelve gates of pearls, guarded of angels, through which enter none that defile, nor any that work abomination or make a lie, but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life; city of the jasper light as clear as crystal, with walls of jasper, whose foundations are of sapphire, and emerald, and beryl, and amethyst; city of the River of Life flowing from the throne of sovereignty, and in midstreet whereof standeth the Tree of Life, twelve-fruited every month, whose leaves of mercy heal the nations, and round whose trunk twines, not the cruel amaranth, but asphodel of life eternal; city of the

door of rest that no man shuts, and of the multitude that no man numbers; city of the emerald throne circled of the rainbow and girt of the elders robed in white with golden crowns, who fall down before it with harps of a new song touching Him who was slain from the foundation of the world, and outpouring the incense of odors, which are the prayers of saints; whose voice is as the voice of many waters; city where they neither thirst nor hunger, and where no sun lights on them nor any heat. "For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

CHAPTER V.

MISS HANNAH.

It is right to go back a little in our story to Helen De Vere. When she left the sweet counsellings of that true gentleman, Sir Chauncey, she went straight to her room, locked the door, and then wept, like the poor, troubled, lonely child she was. Miss Hannah heard her footsteps on the stairs and went to her. She knocked, and there was no answer. "It is I, Helen," said the aunt; "let me come in;" and the door was opened.

Miss Hannah De Vere was what men profanely call an old maid; but her heart was very young. She had kept it young because she had nurtured in it a dream of her youth, forever to be unrealized, and the dream was Love. True, the fates had been averse, and she had given up, as such women do, at the demand of her family, the one man who had ever known her or loved her as strong-hearted men love women; that is to say, Miss Hannah would not disobey her kinsfolks by a marriage before the world, but she kept and was true to the marriage of her heart which she hid from the world, and

now the nuptials were very old. True, her lover was dead, and she wore no widow's weeds; but her heart mourned daily; and while it mourned it hoped — hoped for the Hereafter. For though in the Hereafter they neither marry nor are given in marriage, Miss Hannah fancied how a pure human love, thwarted no more of mere human selfishness and heartlessness, is satisfied in a most holy fruition, so that even He who Himself loved us with a love excelling woman's would not rebuke it. Her heart was therefore very gentle towards all lovers, and long ago she promised herself with a vow, very like a most solemn oath, that she would never come between two hearts.

Helen opened the door for her aunt. The face was very pale and there were tears, but the lips were set, and there was a clear light in the brown eyes, and a certain womanly bearing in her who had been so rudely assailed, and whose nature was roused in defiance of such brutality. Miss Hannah put her arms about her and kissed her forehead again and again without a word. Then she managed very gently to lead her to the sofa and make her comfortable on it, with her head in Miss Hannah's lap, while the latter smoothed gently the soft hair, as any mother might. Then she waited until the sobs that seemed to come out of the child's heart grew more infrequent and at last altogether ceased. Miss Hannah proceeded cautiously to give her good advice.

"So Sir Chauncey has been speaking harshly to you, Helen?" and both hands were laid on the smooth hair, caressingly.

"Yes, Auntie."

"Your uncle is a severe man, and we all have to put up with his behaviors." (Sir Chauncey was one who had interfered with Miss Hannah long ago.)

"If my father were alive (a sob out of her heart) he would never dare to speak to me as he has. I am only an orphan."

"You are my child," the aunt said. "I will look out for you. Can you tell me what he blamed you for?" (O, Miss Hannah of indirection but a very gentle heart, it is you who know exactly.)

"It was about Mr. Ardenne. I can't tell you, Aunt, what was said." The aunt waited patiently for her niece, but the hands that smoothed the hair grew gentler.

"I have no right to love him," she said, finally, after a long silence, as if half in answer to herself, and half to her aunt's silence, which said, "I am waiting, my dear, for you to trust me." "I have no right to love him."

"Why not, my dear?"

"He has never told me that he loved me, Aunt."

"He has never told you anything else since I have known you two," said the aunt, with a half-smile at Helen's innocence.

“Don’t laugh at me, Aunt, I beseech you.”

“Laugh at you! No, no. But tell me, Helen, — you are a child, I know, but tell me. Do you think if a man loves you he can only tell you so in so many words, and say, I love you; come and be my wife? No! if he is a man he will tell you that in a hundred ways: by a look, a tone, a motion, by the way he picks up your glove, or hands you a book, or touches your hand; and a woman’s heart hears every motion or a look. Now, tell me. Did it never occur to you that Mr. Ardenne loved you?”

“I have never known it, Aunt.”

“My poor, dear little Helen. You do not know it? I know it. I am sure he loved you years ago. And he will be true to you. A man with a face like his is always true with women.”

“How do you know it Aunt?”

“Do you wish me to prove it to you, Helen? I should as soon think of proving you were my niece and that I loved you. But I will prove it. Mr. Ardenne is a gentleman; a man compromises himself to a woman as well by his acts as by his words. A gentleman is true to his compromises always. Mr. Ardenne has said by his acts a thousand times, I love you. Therefore he loves you.” Then Miss Hannah, having made her syllogism, waited for her niece.

Helen said, finally, “Sir Chauncey declares that

Mr. Ardenne shall not come here any more, and orders me to give him up. What shall I do?"

"Tell him what Sir Chauncey says, and let him behave accordingly."

"But shall I give him up, Auntie?"

Then the aunt rose to the height of the authority of a woman's heart which once suffered a great wrong. For a maiden of fifty she spoke with vehemence.

"What! give him up, if you love him? Certainly not—never. Suffer, endure wrong, be patient, wait, wait thirty years if needs be, resist no authority, but be true to the man whom you love. God and the good angels never come between two hearts that love each other. The men and women who interfere are neither. I, your poor auntie, tell you something, Helen. I gave up a man once whom I loved and who loved me, because people wished it, and I thought it was my duty. What good did it do? It pleased them, true; but was I bound to please them with my lifelong pain? They married and loved little children. I did not, because they wished it not. If God did not ask the sacrifice what right had they? God gave me a heart to love this man, and I loved him. I love him now, though he is in his grave. If I loved him (and he was pure and noble, believe me, Helen) he had a right to demand I should keep to him, and I wronged him

and myself when I failed him, and obliged selfish and merciless people. No, Helen. Be true to Frederic Ardenne."

Helen kissed the hands which smoothed the hair upon her forehead, as her sufficient answer. Two women understood each other. And hours after, when her niece fell asleep in her arms, Miss Hannah prayed out of her heart to God above them both that He would lead and keep this child true to her own heart and the pure love that dwelt there.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO MEN AT CROSS PURPOSES.

FREDERIC ARDENNE received the congratulations of his friends. Even the Archdeacon was pleased to say that his nephew's sermon was creditable. For the praise of one, which he prized most, he was still waiting.

Meanwhile, as we have seen, unknown to him, his fortunes, in those things which most closely touched his future, had been determined at the De Veres'. It was well at least that what was so sinister should come to him after Easter Sunday. Easter Monday, in the morning, he would visit his friends, though Sir Chauncey had come home. He went, and as he came Helen and her aunt were just entering the carriage for a drive. He lifted his hat and wished the ladies "a Happy Easter." Helen turned to him with a start, and he saw her face was very pale.

"Are you sick, my child?" he said anxiously.

"No! But you must not come here nor even stop now. I can't tell you why, standing here. I will send you a note this evening which will explain. You must really go now, I beg you."

A shadow, dark, stormy, and such as Helen had never seen before on that open, ingenuous face, spread over his features, but he recovered himself at once, and with a bow kept on his walk.

“Not come here? What does that mean?” he thought. “It is a new fashion that forbids me to see Helen De Vere. The late arrival is at the bottom of it. I have to thank Sir Chauncey.” And the hot blood rushed to his head till he was dizzy. But he walked on till he came back home. It was clear that he could know the worst or the best that had happened to him when Helen’s note came, and till then he must remain quiet. The hours were very long until her letter came. It was this :—

Easter Monday.

DEAR FRIEND :—I had hoped to have seen you to-day and talked over with you the Easter Service and some things in which we both are interested; above all, how glad I am you preached your sermon. But God has ordered otherwise. We have always spoken truth together, dear friend, and now I know you wish me to say truly what has happened that I cannot see you any more. Sir Chauncey has taken very peculiar views of things, and has told me that hereafter you are not to come to the house. He is my guardian, and in this matter I must obey. I must also tell you that he has ordered my aunt and myself to be ready to start

for Paris on Wednesday. I am almost ashamed to write this to you, sir, but so it is. That God may keep and bless you is the prayer of your friend,

HELEN DE VERE.

When Frederic Ardenne received this note, he very naturally read it. Then he laid it carefully down upon his table. Then he read it again, and then he put it down again and meditated. What did he meditate? What does one meditate when his ship goes down at sea, or without sail or oar he is borne along the swift raceway of mad waters to the cataract beyond? Nothing carefully or coolly, but all with a certain fever and delirium incident to the withering blow that had fallen upon his heart. And yet his instincts reached at once conclusions from which no after thought could wrest them. He saw that Sir Chauncey had pitted himself against his happiness, and would not turn back for prayer or argument. So far as that man was concerned there was nothing to be done. But then the woman whom he had called a child! In all those years when he had known her, their converse had been so gentle that his love for her needed no question. He would as soon have thought of asking himself whether he breathed as whether he loved Helen De Vere. But now when the blow that was to sever them had fallen, he asked his heart the question, and his heart answered

that there was for him no song, sunshine, or beauty in this world apart from her, and that he loved her and all things in earth and heaven for her. Should he give her up without an effort! He thought she loved him, but that was not first of all his matter. It was his matter that in a thousand ways he had shown his love to her. Should he turn his back on her, and thus unsay his behavior? What man would do it? Only a coward. No. It was demanded of his honor that he should be true to her and do his part. He would go to Sir Chauncey and in due form demand permission to address his niece, since it had been denied. Every man should take the responsibility of his own acts, and he would not shirk his.

So he prepared to go. First he tried to stay the whirl and clamor of his brain; and he read from St. John's Gospel the story of the shepherd and his sheep, and prayed God to give him patience and silence, if it were needed when he went. And then he went.

A servant carried in his card. "Certainly, show him up." Sir Chauncey received his visitor holding his card in his hand as he stood beside the mantel. The two men confronted and measured each other, both cool and ready to enter on business. Sir Chauncey waited for his visitor to begin.

"I beg leave, sir," the young man said, "to explain my business with you. And as between

gentlemen the frankest way is the best, allow me to state that for some time now, in the usual ways, I have paid my addresses to your niece, Miss Helen De Vere, as a suitor, so far as I know without concealment and without denial. I desire to ask your permission, therefore, to prosecute my addresses to that lady under such conditions as you may see fit to impose." And Frederic Ardenne awaited his answer.

"Has my niece told you of an interview I had the happiness of holding with her lately?"

"No, sir."

"Or do you happen to know from her the opinion I then expressed?"

"I only know that you were pleased to order that I was not to visit the house again."

"Then why do you come here?"

"Because it was right for me to speak to you face to face about a matter in which your niece as well as myself are interested, and I could not, after what I suppose has passed, in justice to her, do less than to declare to you my sentiments and ask leave as I now do."

"Do you suppose I am a man to change my mind?"

"I do not know, sir. At least I suppose you to have the justice of a gentleman, and I only desire to endeavor, as every man would naturally wish, to place my request within the pale of your pleasure and your sense of right."

“How do you propose to do that?”

“Only by stating frankly that I have known your niece from a child and have grown to love her very tenderly. I have prospects in my profession, and I trust can offer Miss De Vere a pure and honorable heart.”

Sir Chauncey laughed almost audibly at this last possession by which the young man would win a bride. He contented himself with merely asking, “Is that all you have to say?”

“All that I have to say at present, sir.”

Sir Chauncey, during this colloquy, eyed his visitor from head to foot; and had led the conversation thus far, not with the least imaginable impulse to change his verdict, but to decide at what point he could strike a blow that would cut deepest into the nerves of the man who piqued him by his coolness. “There is a natural-born fighting man under that parson’s coat,” he thought as he surveyed the broad-chested man before him, and if any thought could have mollified Sir Chauncey’s humor, that would.

As it was, he saw that, if at all, there must be a blunt, stand-up fight, and so he went on.

“You ask me,” he said steadily, “if I will allow you to address my niece. I answer you, No. Is that plain enough?”

“Very plain; may I ask for reasons?”

“You have no right to any reasons. It pleases me so.”

"I am to understand, then, that my happiness in life is to be sacrificed to your pleasure."

"Exactly ; if that satisfies you."

"You can hardly imagine that the logic convinces me."

"What has logic to do with it, when I say it is my pleasure? Nothing. I have pleased to hear you. I should have been pleased to have you go without words. But if you wish it, very well. You ask reasons. If I wanted any reasons I should find them in the fact that in my absence, and without asking me, you, a clergyman, had carried on secretly an affair with a child like my niece."

The young man faced him quietly.

"I have always held," he said, "that, holding the position of a gentleman by my profession, I have a perfect right in the way of gentlemen to win a lady's heart, if I am able, without being called on to address a whole family; for which I never expect to have the taste. Provided I am loyal to the lady, I do not consider that I have any particular duties toward them until I have won her heart. Then I shall always ask permission, and not before. Besides, I grew so gradually to love your niece that I could hardly say when it began, nor ask you to allow addresses of which for a long time I was hardly conscious."

"If your reasoning convinces you, very good.

I do not discuss the point. I give you another. Do you think it quite modest for a poor parson like you to aspire to the hand of a De Vere? "

"I am a gentleman's son, sir, and have good blood in my veins. I confess, since your courtesy reminds me of it, that I am not rich."

"And, being poor, it is a part of a parson's wisdom, which is not of this world, to wed a woman because she is rich?"

The young man's face burned with the taunt, but he simply answered, "I am a clergyman, sir; and cannot reply to that as other men might. Allow me to remind you that women and clergymen are, in your code, never insulted, because they cannot defend themselves."

"Very good, young man; if you have finished we will close this interview."

"I have then only one request to make of you. I have known and loved your niece for years, and now you order me to give her up; and you are taking her to the Continent. It is but natural that I should desire to take some leave of her. I ask you, as one man may ask another, as a younger may an elder, to show me this mercy at least, to see her once more, if only a moment, and in your presence."

There was no answer. "Will you grant me, Sir Chauncey De Vere, that favor?"

"I answer you, *No.*"

And then the hot blood of the Ardennes, his blood who had died in the Spanish vineyards, throbbed in the young man's heart, and the tiger which is in all such men gathered himself up to spring upon his victim, and for a moment he felt that to see Helen De Vere again he would eat with his teeth through the living flesh of the man before him his way to her; that he would watch, climb, break, crush his way over every bar or wall built between his life and hers. Only a moment, and the Christian man conquered and his heart was still.

He bowed to the man by the mantel and went out in silence.

Sir Chauncey rung for the butler.

"See that the trunks are brought home for packing," was what he said.

Frederic Ardenne went down the hall stairs with a proud and steady step. He was a strong man, and his will was master. He was ready to help himself, God willing, against the world. He walked into the Archdeacon's library. There was something in the step that moved that dignitary to look up. There was a clear gleam in the young man's eye and a tremulous compression of the thin lips not usual to his nephew, the Archdeacon thought.

"Why, Fred, what has happened?"

"I wish to tell you, Uncle." And he told his

story through — told it with his eyes looking into his uncle's as two honest men that trust each other speak or listen sometimes.

The Archdeacon heard him through. Then he said: "You expect me to advise and give you sympathy. I will do both." And he put his honest hands on Frederic's shoulders. "I know Sir Chauncey De Vere all my days. He is a bad man, with a worse will. You cannot help yourself at present. You must submit. Does his niece love you?"

"She has never told me that; I think it."

"Well, if she loves you and is a woman, she will keep to you. If she does not love you, well; if she loves you but is not a woman she will forget you, and then so much the better that you are quit of her."

"But what am I to do, Uncle?"

"Do! Why, wait, like a man. You distress me, Fred, with your misery."

"Well, I am miserable."

"Then I will shock you to do you good. Wait for what turns up. I tell you a story. There was once a king in the East who had a favorite donkey which he desired should be taught to read. And he gave word in all his realm that any man who would teach the brute in ten years to read should have a bag of gold, but if he failed should lose his head. A certain famous philosopher undertook the job; and when his friends remon-

strated with him upon his danger he answered, 'My friends, I have three chances in my favor: the king may die, or I may die, or the donkey may die.' Remember the donkey, Fred."

"It is unkind in you, Uncle, to laugh at me."

"No, Fred, I do not laugh at you. I only shock you into forgetting for a moment your misery. You are a priest. You know the law. In whatsoever path God orders you to walk, you must walk to the end, as He wills."

"That is very true," the young man said.

Let the reader go back a moment to the society of that true gentleman, Sir Chauncey De Vere. It is wise to go there, for we shall learn a lesson. In order to learn that lesson we will look into his heart a little after Frederic Ardenne has taken leave.

"I hate all priests and the Ardennes," he says in his stately library. "I hate the priests because they are always babbling about something which I do not wish to hear. I hate the Ardennes because of one—this man's father. Years ago and he won a woman, who should have been my wife, away from me—this man's mother. Years ago and it might have been different with me; but now I shall play the farce to the end. I hurt the boy to-day, though, and that score is off." Sir Chauncey De Vere! What a right knightly gentleman is he. What a fit comrade for the angels and the pure in heart who forgive and are forgiven!

CHAPTER VII.

ST. JOHN'S.

WEDNESDAY was but one day off, and Frederic Ardenne had taken no leave of Helen De Vere. That act was difficult. He had planned a hundred ways, and upon deliberation all were laid aside as useless. Yet see her he would, even if he had to leave England for it, and become the shadow of Sir Chauncey's exodus. Not to see her and to tell her, after what had happened, in a single phrase if needs be, that he loved her and could not change to her,—that thought was agony. He waited to follow circumstance. They who can afford to wait in this life often win.

The Archdeacon was his angel of good tidings. "Now, Fred!" that dignitary said as he walked with more than his usual alacrity into his nephew's room. "I told you to wait for something to turn up, and here it is. I have just met Miss Helen in the Close, and she tells me she is going once more to Evening Prayer at St. John's outside the walls. There will not be a large congregation, and if you wish it you can manage to meet her after service."

"Thank you, Uncle," and the young man took his hat and went out.

"He has the Ardenne blood," the Archdeacon said to himself, "and if he were not a priest it would ill fare with the man who crossed his path."

It was a curious fact with all the Ardennes that when roused in controversy the military blood in them showed itself at once in military manners; and Frederic Ardenne, as he walked on to St. John's with his firm, eager step had about him in face and eye the manner of a soldier, with whom it would not be pleasant meddling. He was only fighting his way against fate to the one word he had vowed to speak with Helen De Vere.

St. John's lies outside Chester walls, among graves, and is very old. A church of some sort has stood there almost from the time when tidings of the Cross was first heard in Britain. Before Edward and Henry, matins and evensong had been sung within its walls, and now when all the kings and queens of the Plantagenet and Tudor lines were in their graves, the song of praise and prayer went on as ever. St John's itself was a Norman pile of the red sandstone found hereabouts, but the very stone was crumbled with age. Time had thrown down its statues of the saints, so that only one, a Saxon king's, they say, remained, and that stood far up on the front face of the square tower, looking from under its stone crown at those Welsh

hills in the west that seemed hardly so old as the church itself. Parts of the edifice, where the monks had dwelt, had fallen in ruins, and trees grew where cowed men had once eaten or slept. In the part still standing was the service. And there, over the graves of the dead, whose epitaphs of brass, inlaid in the broad stones of the pavement, were worn bright by the feet of the living, and with monuments of dead knights and priests and burghers round them, and the gray dust of the generations everywhere, under the low-bowed but mighty Norman arches, a worship that never dies was going on.

Frederic went in under the low archway of its side door to the service. He was late indeed, for priest and people were saying again the Apostles' Creed, the symbol of that Faith which, under all skies, the Church confesses. By the side of one of the heavy and shadowy arches, among the sparse congregation, he recognized Helen's form, and even imagined he heard her voice in the Creed. When Prayers were ended he waited for her outside. She came out among the last, a child, almost, under the old archway. Her face lighted up when she saw him with a glad surprise.

"How came you here, sir?"

"I came to see you, my child."

"I am very glad you came."

"Walk with me, then," and she went on with

him without asking where or why. It sufficed her that for this one moment, sacred to her heart out of an unknown and dreaded future, she was with him.

"The good God sent you here," he said, after awhile. "To-morrow is Wednesday, and I was afraid you would leave England before I had a chance to speak one word to you of the many I wish to say."

"God is very good, sir, but I always come to St. John's in Easter week, because they say this was my poor mother's parish church, and the pew where I sat to-night was hers, Miss Hannah tells me, and in that church I always feel as if my mother was nearer to me than anywhere else. When I am troubled I always turn to her. They say I should turn to God. But my mother is with Him and I pray to both. I could not leave England without coming here once more."

Frederic led her along the path that ran among the graves till they came to the middle of the yard, which lies northward from St. John's. "Sit down upon this stone," he said, pointing to the broad mossy tablet that covered one of the many sleepers hereabouts. "I want to say some things to you, my child." So they both sat down on a grave. It might seem a strange place and time to which Fate or Providence had brought these lovers to say last words. It had been sunset some time now,

and the gray mist on the distant hills had deepened to the night shadows, while the smoky twilight fell down upon the ancient houses of the town. Was it a prophecy of the night that was henceforth to follow the one Spring day of their love, now ending? Things before them and around had perished. Why should not their love waste too? The whole earth had changed since *St. John's* was built. The Saxon king, high up in the bell tower, now looked down on strangers; and they who did him reverence when he first was throned were all gone. Why should they not change, and in due time grow strange? And the king in the tower could not answer them, nor the stars that began to look down from their thrones upon the lovers; but their hearts answered to themselves, that what is truly love in man or woman does not change nor fail.

"Did you know I had been with Sir Chauncey?" he asked.

"I imagined as much. I hope there was nothing very unpleasant between you."

"It was as pleasant as Sir Chauncey would be likely to make it. But I have nothing to do with him except as he concerns you. You and I both know he has come between us, and it is a time that asks plain words. I have been frank with you in my acts. I will be equally frank in what I say. You know, or I hope you know, that I have

loved you for a long time. I loved you when you were a child. I loved you as I saw you grow up. I love you now you are a woman; and I love you now more than ever, when your uncle breaks in so bitterly against my heart. I shall never cease to love you. I did not mean to say this to you until I had won my place, and could offer you something that a man wishes for one he would make his wife—an honorable place and name. My career has just begun, and I am forced to speak. I do not offer you my love. I only tell you I gave it to you long ago. Tell me now, will you come to me and be my wife?"

There was no answer, but a little hand was laid very gently in his.

"Speak to me, my child."

"What more can I say to you than I am saying now?"

"Tell me that you love me."

"I love you, Frederic Ardenne."

"Look me now in the eyes and say that again, please."

"I love you, Frederic Ardenne." And then his strong hand closed gently over the one in his.

"Say now, I will never change to you."

"I will never change to you."

"And in this world and the next I will be true to you."

"In this world and the next I will be true to you."

"This was my mother's ring, my child," he said, "that I have long since kept for this," and he put it upon her marriage finger. "Now take your marriage finger and with it sign on my hand here the sign of the Cross." And he held his open right hand for her.

She did it.

"Now, Helen, you have signed that hand to you. You have signed it away from dishonor, and devoted it to good deeds. For your sake, as well as His sake who gave you to me, I will try to keep it a man's hand."

"So now you belong to me, my child," he continued.

"I belong to you, sir."

"Now I can trust you with Sir Chauncey to go to Paris?" he said, half-smiling.

"Is it right, sir, for you to ask me that now after what has been?"

"No, Helen. Men are selfish; and they fear for that which they most desire. I do trust you, as I would only trust God beside."

"You may trust me."

"But Helen, you go away from me to-morrow, you know not where."

"Does that matter to my love?"

"And it may be months or years before we meet again. Sir Chauncey may be cruel as he is certainly wilful, and he has it in his power to do mischief."

"I will wait patiently for you, so long as God wills."

"And obey Sir Chauncey?"

"So far as I owe him the obedience of a ward. But this one thing, Frederic," and her voice faltered as for the first and last time in this interview she uttered that name which sounded so strangely upon her lips, "I have promised my own heart (and I know God heard it) that, whether it be months or years, as He may order, I will hold true to you, and will be your wife."

"My dear little wife."

And then he put his arms about her, and kissed the white forehead again and again. After they went home together, and the future was with God.

Frederic left her at her door.

"Pax tecum," he said.

"Et cum spiritu tuo," was the answer, and she went in.

"Who brought you home to-night, Helen?" Sir Chauncey asked, when she passed by the library.

"Mr. Ardenne."

Miss Hannah wondered at Helen's courage.

Sir Chauncey thought of the trunks. Each man to his mission. That night the destiny of a heart had passed out forever from beneath the rule of Sir Chauncey De Vere, and when it said its prayers, it bowed itself submissively to God. And He is wont to keep a trust.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRASBOURG MINSTER.

THE De Veres went to Paris, and in its clean and delicate festivities Sir Chauncey found his Paradise. Frederic Ardenne stood to his duty. He absorbed himself in studies, but somehow a memory wrote itself on every page he read, and when the book was shut a woman stood by the tired student until his study grew to a palace; only the queen of it was of intangible substance and altogether silent. Chester itself had changed to him. The very town seemed heartless. The shadows upon the cathedral had grown older. Helen had carried away the sunshine with her, and he felt it. It is only when the sun goes down that we so sorely miss the sunshine. Yet he wrought as he best could.

It was news of Helen's sickness that broke down his resolution. It came to him in some indirect rumor that she was lying at the very gate of the grave in Paris. A servant of Sir Chauncey's had written it to his sweetheart in the Close, and the tidings found their slow way to him. It shut the books, and then it drove him in a swift feverish

flight across the Channel. At Sir Chauncey's hotel he inquired for news. "The young English lady," they said, "had been very sick some two months back and had been ordered by her physician, on her convalescence, to Switzerland for mountain air. They knew nothing more. That night he went towards the Alps. Once or twice in his impatient and heart-sick journey he found traces of the travellers. He heard of Sir Chauncey among the servants of the inns. Had Sir Chauncey's oaths been pencils he would have left in his wanderings very black marks upon most of them. He tracked them through the Oberland. "A very delicate and pale young English lady, with her uncle and aunt," the landlord said, "in search of health;" and that was the only consolation they flung in their busy carelessness to a heart that ached. At Interlaken he found something plain. "The trunks had been marked," they said, "for Strasbourg," and Sir Chauncey had vouchsafed the host the information that he meant to solace himself for all his fatigues with the *pâtés de fois gras* of that gourmandizing but sleepy city. So Fred-eric turned again to the Rhine.

The morning after his arrival, at breakfast in his inn, his courier brought him good news. "The English gentleman had taken apartments in the chief hotel, for a three months' stay, and had been settled there some two weeks." It was true, then,

that the same walls enclosed them both, and Helen was out of danger. But now the real danger began, and his more sober mind reflected.

Had not they two left all to God, and was not his journey here faithless after all?

And love and reason strove together. What if he went to Helen? What had he to say to her, who had left him in England to stand to his work and his love through his work? If he forced himself into her presence, Sir Chauncey might bid her to the ends of the earth, and she must go. And yet he would not go out through Strasbourg gates without looking upon the pale face again. So he waited his opportunity at his inn.

It may be easily imagined that Frederic Ardenne wished to miss no chance of meeting Helen. But in the fortnight that elapsed before he saw her he had almost ceased to hope. It was an instinct therefore which told him, when at breakfast he heard there was to be a special service that evening in the Cathedral, that he should somehow meet her there. It was therefore with a throbbing heart that he stationed himself, in the twilight, under the great archway, and watched the multitude going in. The service, the gray-haired verger told him, was in behalf of a dead alderman who had left great charities to the Strasbourg parishes. Frederic watched the faces as they came in until his very brain swam with

fatigue, but yet one face did not appear. Then suddenly a new sensation came over him — a sense that somewhere in the crowd Helen was approaching him, was at hand. No — yes; just now, under the portal, a pale, worn face, that he should have known among ten thousand — *his* face — appeared, a company, apparently of English men and women, around her. He did not move — he even held his breath — he could not move. And she passed him at not more than an arm's length and did not see him! He roused himself and pressed in amongst the crowd. Up the nave slowly, with her in sight, he kept on. He saw where she knelt with the rest, and he knelt almost beside her.

The service began. It was Mozart's Requiem which they sang; and as the music rose and sank, trembled and sobbed, and took up again its thrilling litanies and its holy aspiration, one more worshipful than Frederic might have marked again how music kindles and lifts up aspiration unto God, who is the soul of harmony. But Frederic saw only the kneeling form before him, and heard only the low tones of an English maiden bidding him adieu in the twilight of a churchyard across seas. The service ended, but he still watched one form among the multitude, which now rose from its knees to go away. Could he speak to her surrounded by her companions? Impossible.

And yet she was almost touching him. It was plain from her movements that she was talking to the lady beside her about the Minster. She seemed to have stopped a moment by herself to examine the exquisite sculpture of the pulpit as she came by it. In an instant her comrades, not missing her, had swept on with the crowd, and she was quite alone. She turned from the sculpture a moment after, and Frederic saw her start — he thought she trembled at missing her friends. His time had come. He whispered in her ear her name. She turned to him amazed. In an instant, with a half-reproach in her voice, she said, "How came you here, Frederic Ardenne? You peril everything for both of us."

"I heard you were dying in Paris, and I could not stay away. I have followed you here to see your face once more — a moment."

"But was it not agreed that you were to stand in your place and trust me to God?"

"Yes."

"And cannot you trust me to Him? Your coming here says, 'No.'"

"You are ice to say this," he answered almost passionately.

And then she turned upon him a face, silent, constant, the face of an angel almost, and the face answered him. It was the face of a woman, young and suffering, but of a woman whose soul

was overwatched by the twin angels of Love and Duty.

"Frederic," she said then, "you are too strong to fail your own heart. It is your office to wait for what God sends you. First of all you belong to Him,—next to me. I claim you out of my heart only when God surrenders you to me. If both our lives are laid in God's hand, they must always be close together. I saw all this when I was sick in Paris and you away in England, and I know now what it is to love you, now that I love God more."

Frederic Ardenne said nothing. He held out his hand. She took it with both her own.

"You must stay here," he said, "until your friends come back for you, when they miss you. Good night."

And the young man went away and watched from among the shadows of the stalwart pillars until her friends came back and she went out.

Then he went home to his inn with a fever in his very blood; rebuked, ashamed, confounded. The child whom he loved had spoken; most of all had spoken what was true—what his heart told him was true. She was bearing her cross, and he had run away from his to Strasbourg. Then, alone in his chamber, with his face in his hands, he looked as men once or twice in a lifetime look at themselves. He looked into his innermost heart and judged it by

alaw of iron, and yet — it remained a heart of flesh. It was hours before that silent reckoning ended, and then weary, patient once more, he looked around him. The unwearied moonlight was at his feet.

He threw open his window and watched the Minster, as in the moonlight across the square it rose in its deserted silence towards the stars. Upon its high altar they offered the daily Sacrifice; but the structure itself was also sacrifice. Into that temple had been wrought the prayers and offerings of generations. Its price had been the cups of silver and gold out of which kings had drunk; the scarlet and purple and fine linen which the queen had denied her beauty for its glory; the timber from the hills that the weary peasant, forgotten when scarcely known, had hewn and brought; a basket of fruit or a hamper of grapes from some woman's vineyard — these had lifted the Minster towards the skies. It was the children of Him who had given Himself in sacrifice who had laid their little upon His magnificent and sheltering altar, inspired by that spirit of self-surrender by which His Church is garnished and kept.

Where was Erwin Von Steinbach, who had planned that pile? Where was his child, Sabrina, who had aided her father's hands with a womanly skill and prowess not yet forgotten? No man

could find their graves under the shadows of the temple they had built. Where, too, was the twin tower to that which rose so loftily, this night, alone? It had perished with the brain which planned it, and even this Minster remained incomplete. It was only a human work which he saw.

He watched the great spire in the moonshine — on the one side light, and on the other shadow. So, he thought, is all life — light and shade; but the shade is always because the substances of this world hide from our hearts the heavenly light, which in itself is always full and rounded. On how many things had that spire looked down since it was built. It had seen the generations of a thousand Rhine villages play out their play of life, and now it could hardly count their graves. It had overlooked a more solemn procession than the silent river between the hills flowing on to the sea; for the river of human life under its ken was vaster and more solemn than any flood. It looked down to-night, as it had for ages, upon the living and the dead; and so long as it looked it had pointed, whether there were clouds or moonlight, towards the heavens, as though it would lift up the souls of the human creatures dwelling under its shadows towards the skies. So it was this hour pointing with a cross.

It was then, as he looked on Strasbourg Minster, that the henceforth master-thought of his life rose

in his heart, as a sun rises over chaos to mould it into harmonies. The thought was this. The law of life is sacrifice, but when one lays his sacrifice upon the altar, the cross above it pointing skywards denotes the Invisible for whom true sacrifice alone is made. It was his life that Frederic Ardenne owed the Church, and that sacrifice would reach beyond the stars and draw down a blessing on him who dwelt an hour or so beneath them. And as he looked out into the moonlight that thought rose clear, musical, shining, upon his soul, possessing him and filling him with peace.

He rung the bell for his servant. "To-morrow," he said, "we start for England." On the morrow he went.

CHAPTER IX.

AUBREY PARISH.

THE Rev. Frederic Ardenne, for some ten years, had been the rector of St. Clement's, Aubrey Parish, in the American Diocese of Riverland. To slur over in a single sentence ten years of a man's life, especially a lover's, comes very close to assassination.

Yet it is the plain fact, so far as this story runs.

When Frederic Ardenne left Helen De Vere at Strasbourg he went back to Chester and his duties. But the blight in his heart had smitten the place with desolation. Its very comfortable and placid life fretted his feverish heart. To make some great sacrifice of himself, for duty,—to become a beggar and on foot in the lanes and fields of England preaching Christ to the brutal and the outcast, as the ancient priests had done; to witness to the Faith and die gladly for it, as the old martyrs had; to make an utter sacrifice of all for Him who saves all by His perpetual sacrifice — was easy; but to exist where and as he was — impossible. He had heard that missionaries were wanted in the Canadas. The wilderness there

might satisfy his heart as ease and comfort never would. His swift decision his uncle, the Archdeacon, found no words to alter. Armed with letters missive, he went out to that colony. On the frontiers, among Indians and backwoodsmen, in a cabin that was both his church and home, he had spent five rugged and solitary years of clerical toil. It is not necessary to tell their story. Among the forests, by the finger of God, it had been rewritten upon his heart as his rule of life, "As God wills, when God wills;" and he obeyed. It was here that, worn out with work, he had been found by his Bishop, on the latter's visitation, unconscious and nigh to death, but tenderly nursed by the rough folk he served. In due time the Bishop had him removed to his own house, where he slowly came back to health. Then the physicians said that to return to the wild was certain death; and against his wish, but as God willed, his sacrifice was to be made elsewhere. The Bishop of Riverland, on his summer travels through these parts, had heard of him, and at once offered him a place in his diocese. Thus he came to Aubrey Parish, where he had now been rector for some five years more.

Aubrey Parish is a realm between two rivers, which here gather their waters into one. Every one likes the rivers, and some the people who live between them. The parish begins at the north

where at a very unsocial distance these rivers break from the wooded hills which for a long way have kept them company. It ends where they join, and lies in the shape of a triangle, with its apex to the south. Across these rivers from the parish are farmhouses, orchards, patches of woodland and hills everywhere bounding the horizon, while scattered along their banks, among the oaks, the white houses look down by day into the restless flood and at night cast the slender ray of their lamps upon its darkness.

Time and progress have divided the parish into two villages. Old Town, as its name denotes, was settled first, and occupies by far the larger part of the parish. Factory Village, with its workshops, built on and under the bluff, where the rivers join, lays claim to what land is left. Old Town is full of dignity and sleep, and monopolizes all the antiquity and family of that locality. It quietly claims a respectability so eminent as to forbid denial.

But from its broad square houses under the elms, around its Common, many young men had gone and gained place in the great world, until the fame of Aubrey men had become an heirloom to those who stayed at home. Here were the churches and meeting-houses, and just off the Common the graveyard, where Aubrey folk were brought, when work was done, to sleep so long.

Factory Village owned to a very different strain and spirit. It had been begun as a venture not more than thirty years before, by a dyke that turned the river over a half dozen millwheels, and hence had sprung all the thrift of the borough. Its loud-voiced and thrifty citizens seemed to absorb their habits from their loud-voiced and busy machineries, which all day long in monotonous and dreary drone, as unwilling slaves of masters whom they feared but served, kept coining gold for them, and at night were suffered to sleep in the great factories that they might sweat and slave with the same reluctant spirit on the morrow. The mill-owners were those progressive men, with a strong scent for money, who would undertake to make charcoal out of river water, had there been money in it, or shares in a company for mining diamonds out of Aubrey meadows, had the market tolerated such a novel venture. Some men thought them sordid and grasping; but in youth their wits had been sharpened by their wants, until they only hungered after money, and in middle age they were able to crave nothing else. The artisans of the village were a polyglot company, native and foreign, who just here wrought out the problem of the curse of work, ever asking, but never answering, their own question, why they were born to toil.

Old Town folk heartily despised the Factory as

something new and extremely vulgar. Its democratic and noisy industries shocked their sleepy stateliness, and by instinct they quarrelled with the iron hands that coined gold for others in that competition which went on between them. They had always the intent to grow rich, like their neighbors, but somehow a sad, inexorable necessity or laziness or something else seemed to keep them always where they were. From the foot of the Hill of Gold they looked up to their neighbors far above them to revile them in their hearts. Very little of all this, for a casual observer, came to the surface, but underneath it was as has been writ. When a Factory man, for instance, took out his family in his new double-seated carriage through Old Town, the gossips who sat by the open windows knitting, and did not even own a chaise, drew their white caps more primly about their wrinkled faces, as they related out of what hole he and his had been digged. The young ladies of Old Town, too, assumed a patronizing air when they met their sisters of Factory pedigree, though the latter, as better dressed, refused to do them honor. In fine, everything about the factory but its bank checks was at a discount among the folks who lived around Aubrey Common and nursed their somnolent pride of family just as if the very stars did not show a much older and more courtly lineage than theirs,

and yet every night looked down upon the Factory folk as benignly as ever star looked upon prince or prelate or any other high bred's like those in Old Town.

The religions of Aubrey Parish were almost as diverse as its mills, and religion in Turk or any other Gentile is a fountain to color and flavor human life. All the country hereabout in Colonial times had been settled by Puritans, who lived out their faith with a very logical exactness and in unity of spirit. But the elders were long since dead, and new times had brought in novelties to their meeting-house, strange enough almost to make them turn in their graves. The Bible had been read each man for himself, and so many things had been read into it and out of it, that now hardly two were quite agreed in their private judgment as to what these things meant. So there had come to be half a dozen congregations, and in the pulpits of the more ardent spirits, those thundering preachers, whose mission was, as it looked, to wake God out of sleep and to wrest from Him a blessing. Indeed, so incessant had been these changes that the evil-minded were wont to say that the cock upon the steeple, which was forever veering in the wind, whose prototype once spake to Peter, was a symbol of that denial of their Lord which was now going on.

St. Clement's, which stood among the meeting-

houses on the green, had existed at first by the not over-gracious permission of its powerful neighbors, who thought it a very inn of evil spirits, and a place where forbidden rites affronted the simplicity of true religion. Truth to say, it was farther away from them than any town common in the world could possibly separate it. In St. Clement's everything was old and fixed. It had a certain solemnity and peace about it as of the dead and graves (for its worship had been handed down by generations who had gone), and derived itself from a broken tomb which was very old. Yet every Sunday its chanted psalms and litanies, through which ran, as it were, the cry of the human for rest and peace, uplifted the soul towards a coming future, where were no graves, and all apostles and confessors lived again. This it was that provoked not a few to call its worship stupid or bigoted or queer, as the measure of their ignorance advised them. If a true Puritan strayed in through the porch to its service, he either wondered and then slept through it, or went away surprised that sensible folk could relish anything so dull. The reason for all this was that St. Clement's worship had long ago taken good care to perpetuate itself as it was and had been for all generations. Eternity, even in worship, has, no doubt, a certain monotony about it, but a variety which is forever changing can only be for time. Its neighbors were always making

themselves a new ark to contain the shewbread and the sacred relics, and therefore the symbolic angels that rested upon its lid must be often changed. But St. Clement's people, as they thought, carried that ancient ark whose pattern once for all had been revealed to men in the Mount.

St. Clement's church itself was built of gray stone and set in a rock ledge, which just here thrust its head above ground, and was thus, as its friends said, twice founded upon a rock. St. Clement's rectory, a little gray, rambling house, stood under its mingled elms and maples hard by the church. The rectors who had lived in it had each adorned it with their special handicraft and taste. One had been a clever mechanician, and had curiously contrived a score of things for that home's perpetual comfort. Another had been an astronomer, and the hole he cut in the roof to look at the heavens was left long after he had gone where the stars are never pale. Others had been deft scribes and written down among the births and deaths and marriages many strange things of life in Aubrey Parish as they had seen them, so that the Parish Register had come to have more tragedy, if not comedy, than almost any volume in their library. A few were skilful gardeners, who had brought home from foreign travel such rare plants as would live in such a climate, and the ivy which crept up the gray sides of St. Clement's had been brought from

an English abbey. Like every old house, the rectory had a history, and had it had speech it would have told a sweet, pathetic story of its own.

Such was Aubrey Parish and the house which for some five years now the Rev. Frederic Ardenne had occupied. Is it complained that such digressions break up our story? This is a story of life — a river flowing underground, but every now and then breaking into broad reaches with the shadow or the sunshine on them, and at last hiding again among the silences.

CHAPTER X.

HELEN DE VERE.

BUT what of Helen De Vere in all these years? Outwardly she followed the will of Sir Chauncey over half Europe; yet her home was always where her heart was, at the side of Frederic Ardenne. Sir Chauncey was a great pilgrim, only his shrines were not those of the saints. So he often crossed or doubled on his own track according as his noble appetites required, and repeated himself on those cities where they found most food. Yet generally he left the two women he was dragging at his chariot wheels to their own affairs, and they could scarcely afford to mind his.

Young womanhood, such as Helen's was, grows swiftly mature in that wisdom which is born of feminine instincts, keen with the logic of a woman's soul. The girl had become a woman long before Sir Chauncey had dined at many inns, and was waxing daily in her strong, patient, silent heart-life. The law of obedience, which, wisely or unwisely, she had herself set as a barrier between herself and Frederic Ardenne, restrained, indeed, but never dried up, the waters of her new womanhood. Ab-

sent in the body, her soul followed him daily, sometimes hourly. And as those waters, ruled of her conscience, would neither babble nor break against the barrier, as they welled up they retreated and overswept all the royal domain of a woman's nature, every nook and corner of it, until, in her silent submission, she came to possess her soul as a sacred trust for him. And as living waters must impart the life they hold or else grow stagnant, so the tide of her love in the service of Him whose name is Love flowed out into sacrifice for others. Wherever on the Continent Sir Chauncey found his inn, she was sure to find her Church. The chaplains in a score of cities long remembered the young English girl who showed a strength so gentle in the care of their poor and sick folk. Her money and her service, rain or shine, were at command, and she gained much repute as one quick to discriminate between the good and evil among those to whom she ministered. And always, in the hovels, and with the sick in the last passage, she was comforted in that hers was the like service, though under another sun, with him whose love had made all things so pure and sweet for her. And always in that mighty Eucharistic Feast, that Ecstasy of Saints, whose charity over-reaches tide and time, to bind His to Him and to each other, absence became presence and she was not alone.

She had written no inquiries back to Chester, and

Sir Chauncey so far forth was satisfied. Miss Hannah had, and received answers too; which her brother, with his high-bred tact, had managed to read before her. So one day he said abruptly to that lady, "I want no more letters out of Chester. Do you hear?" And the correspondence ceased.

Yet he had his own plans for his niece. What they were appeared in an interview to which he commanded her one spring day in Florence. On such state occasions he always dressed himself with extra care and made the most of his lingering carcass dressed in the newest modes. That day he looked to Helen, as she came into his apartments, like Decay in the robes of Harlequin.

Something, too, boded in his face, whose lines were always a trifle harder when he had a coarse thing to say. He wasted no words this time.

"You are getting old, Helen. Why don't you marry?"

"Marry? Uncle (the brown eyes wide open and alarmed). I do not wish to marry."

"Ha! a woman, and not wish to marry? What nonsense! I have found to my cost that a woman with only one foot out of the grave thinks herself marriageable; and women of an uncertain age never fix with themselves a time when they will decline a wedding ring. No, to be sure, you are not speaking truth, girl. All of you wish to marry." And he laughed a dry, wooden laugh, which seemed

to come from no nearer his heart (if he had one) than his throat, which he certainly had.

“But I have told you the truth, Uncle.”

Sir Chauncey looked out at the windows and then round the room, until his eyes came down to where the woman stood, pale and still, with the blood rushing back to her heart, which had been struck with a cruel blow. He was only ruminating an instant, on the high road to mischief. He even indulged in a curt whistle of satisfaction. Then he went at his work again.

“But I wish you to marry, Helen. You ought to be settled instead of gadding about with me — and the priests,” he added in a more stomachic tone. There was no answer, but silence, a long space, between them.

“Do you hear?” he went on at last; “I wish you to marry. Will you oblige me?” Still no answer. Then another long pause, in which Sir Chauncey, cunningly as he thought, left his niece to meditate her charming prospects. “Since you have lost your tongue, Miss, you will allow me to answer for you. You will marry. You will be glad to have me name the happy gentleman I have selected for your husband. It is Sir John English, who dined here yesterday.”

“But I do not love him, Uncle.”

“Love him! bah! you silly chit, what has that to do with marriage?”

“But you would not have me marry a man I did not love?”

“Yes, faith, I would. Study to love him, grow to love him, as these Italian women do when their mothers marry them behind their backs, and look out for the DOT to boot. He has ten thousand pounds a year and good blood to back his suit with any girl.”

“But I am an Englishwoman, Uncle,” Helen pleaded.

“Nonsense! Don’t English mothers sell their daughters every day in London parlors, and deliver the merchandise with all the gauze and crinoline thrown in to boot at leisure, as coolly as ever Turk sold his Circassian beauties in the market-place? Look at me now, girl.” Sir Chauncey rose from his chair, and, stretching up his portly figure, advanced towards her. “You would say now, if you spoke the truth, that I am neither young nor handsome. In fact, you know that I am old and gouty. Yet if I had a hundred thousand pounds to my name, I could go among the fat dowagers to-morrow, and they would sell me any one of a score of girls as handsome as you are, even if they had to complete the sale, prayer-book in hand, when they were going in to the Sacrament—the pious souls! And the young lady herself—bah! with such a mother, what could she do? Why, marry me and my gout together. ‘Mamma had told her I was too

old to live long, and she would look charmingly in widow's weeds. Weeds are so becoming to a blonde, you know.' Come, marry me now Sir John English. Will you?"

Before, in the Chester parlor, he had had a mere child to deal with; now there was a woman. And womanhood such as hers is strength, not of iron, storm, or sea wave, nor even of the granite hills, but the strength of the earth bearing flowers after each bitter winter—that awful, passive power, Oriental, as Indian races show, who wait and submit the neck for a thousand ages, to win, perhaps, at last. Sir Chauncey's first salute had shocked her to a mental paralysis, which swiftly passed. Then her soul, out of deep fountains, rose to resist, and she put against his wish all of herself down to the last drop of her being, made pure and strong by conscience. This, too, not by reason, but that wiser than reason, a woman's instincts; and these in the very whirl of her brain did their work unerringly. So at his last inquiry the woman turned her eyes full in Sir Chauncey's face, and with her soul a thousand leagues, as it were, away from the man before her, answered, "No." It was a "No" which carried with it a falling inflection that seemed to reach the very floor.

Sir Chauncey's bodily rage was tremulous, but he looked on and on at her until he said, "Go to your room, Miss; I will arrange this matter."

Helen De Vere did go to her room, and what was more, when she got there she went straight to work to examine this whole business of her right relations with her guardian. First of all, she verified the verdict of her instincts by her reason. This was a short task. Then she undertook the larger business of the whole situation. She had left Frederic Ardenne and followed this man for years because he stood in the place of her parents, and the Church had taught her, "Honor thy father and thy mother." And yet this very day she had utterly refused obedience. How could she be right both ways? Her strong, loyal nature finally touched the logic of the matter at its very roots. "There is not one commandment, but ten," she said. "Each commandment limits, wherever it touches, all the others. I may obey my parents, but never so as to disobey in any way Him who is in all His laws. Marriage without love, at any one's decree, offends all purity in woman. I have set up a barrier of duty between my soul's life and Frederic Ardenne's presence. But until God out of His skies bids me other, I will not defile the waters."

These questions and others consumed her whole day. Why should not all honest minds mingle their meditations with hers? What is marriage? Marriage must be either brutal or spiritual. Once in Christendom, from strand to summit of the ever-

lasting hills, it was called a sacrament. Now they call it something else — an alliance, a social compact, an economic union; and by public sentiment in diverse quarters a mere convenience to be erased in pliant courts of law almost any time.

But yet what is it? An Apostle, who ought to be authority with apostolic people, calls it a great mystery, hinting at that ineffable marriage of Christ with His Church which it takes two worlds and one eternity to fulfil. Above all, what is it for a woman? For since a woman became the Mother of God, Christendom clearly holds that womanhood, even to the lowest hag, is consecrated by a new relationship to the Divine. Sister of the Virgin Mother, and every woman brings an awful dowry to her marriage. Marriage, therefore, from which the soul absents itself forever violates the purity of God, though every priest on the round globe should advise or celebrate the sacrilege.

But Sir Chauncey went at his work, such as it was. And to show forth his will, it is necessary to explain in brief his comrade in all this trouble. Sir John English was an ordinary Briton, who had inherited dead men's monies and had never tried to make any living man, except himself, happier for his luck. He was not too proud to be fed out of the hand of some one's labor, and yet would do no honest work in a world where even the very sand grains toil. He had long since run away from

his station in that English land from which he had derived his very bone and muscle, and on the Continent wasted his substance upon himself so as to make that self daily the lesser man. His was a diminuendo life, sinking down through discords to silence. He had met Sir Chauncey at the cafés, and won his admiration by his skill at billiards and several other lesser and, sooth to say, more uncertain virtues. Cousin in the flesh, at least, he was to Sir Chauncey's pastimes, and the latter, when maudlin with wine, had promised him his niece. He had been home with Sir Chauncey several times to dinner, and had met Miss Helen so. To be brief, after his interview with his niece, just recorded, Sir Chauncey tried other devices, and made haste to deliver the promised goods. But Helen De Vere failed to be charming; and Sir Chauncey was soon let by Sir John's own sweet will. "Marry that woman!" he said, at last; "I would as soon marry the Prayer Book!"

CHAPTER XI.

MOTHER WALKER.

WE begin with Aubrey folk, where our blessed Lord began, with the poor. Mother Walker was one whose poverty and piety gave her no uncertain claim upon all honest Christians. She lived in three rooms of a little black, wooden house, across the river, which had once known better days, when a thrifty Puritan family were growing up, who, as they came to luck, turned their backs on the old home for the more garish world before them. It had, outside, a rickety pair of stairs, which led to the second story ; its windows were always rattling in the shrunk casings when the wind blew ; and an occasional window blind, half unhinged and askew upon its rusty fastening, as black as the rest of the house, and the loose clapboards over the ancient oak frame, seemed to say that the very house was dead or at least dying with age. It was a place where poverty hides itself under the mantle of decay.

Mother Walker, in outward things, was very like her house ; she was a short, stout-built, fresh-colored woman, who might have once been handsome, but

was now clearly old. She wore a white cap, which was always clean, and her dress was of no particular age or fashion. She was an emigrant from England, and had lived hereabouts for many years. She was always poor, and had never pretended to be anything else, but gained a precarious livelihood among the town folks by her needle as long as her strength lasted, and for some time now had aged so greatly as to be numbered among the poor of the parish, who are fed by the communion alms. Yet she had that simple-hearted, pious resignation to her lot, and gratitude for favors, which hindered people from thinking of her as a beggar, and they who gave her alms had a sense of doing themselves a favor. Every one spoke to her, when, on Sunday mornings, staff in hand, she wended her way to church, and took her one seat by the porch always a half-hour or so before the service. When at the Communion, she came tottering up the aisle, and knelt with the rest at the chancel rail, among the devout, there were none noted more tenderly by the congregation than she; and apart from the business of preparing her frugal meals and minding her three rooms, her human affairs seemed to begin and end in her parish church. And as poverty in all Christian ages finds its single refuge at the altar, so Mother Walker, as strength and store failed her, seemed to cling closer to holy things for refuge. For one who looked so

old, she was very young, and in all her years of poverty had maintained those cheerful manners which are so winning in the truly Christian poor.

Even the young folk, especially the girls, were fond of paying her visits, and the very children were not afraid of being found in her great arm-chair, sometimes asleep. Somehow, there was a subtle affinity between them, for she also, despite her years, belonged among those little ones of whom the Master said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." All the parish were her friends, because she was the friend of all; and St. Clement's services would have seemed incomplete had she been absent.

There was the sound of feet on the stairs outside and a knock at Mother Walker's door. The old lady set down her earthen teapot, and then said, "Come in, my love." So the visitor came in. "Ah, my love, I know your step," she said to the young girl who now came in and kissed her. "It is your day, and I was sure you would come down and read to me out of the Good Book. You are my eyes, my love, and now when I can't see clear with my spectacles it's such a blessing to have you read."

"Yes, Mother, I knew you would look for me, and so I hurried off from school, to pay you a little visit," and the new comer took off her hat, put one or two chairs, near her, back in their

places, as though she was quite at home, then she took a look round the room to see if Mother Walker's housekeeping was quite in order, and said, "How nicely you keep your room, Mother."

"Ah, my love, I try very hard to keep tidy, and it's not much I have to set to rights; but my mother always taught me that a little well kept was better than a great deal out of sorts, and we must honor our father and our mother, you know. I think of her a dozen times a day when I go to do something, and ask myself how she would do it; but she kept house better nor I, and I can't see the dust very well when it gets on the chairs, though I go round with a cloth; and there's a deal of dust about in this old house some way."

"I wish I may keep house as well, when I am as old," said her visitor.

It is time that this visitor should be introduced, to whomsoever it may concern. Lucy Farewell is an orphan. She is also the teacher of St. Clement's school. She is further the ward of Miss Mary Kendrick, a famous maiden in the annals of the aforesaid parish, of whom we shall hear more anon.

For the present Lucy Farewell, as we see, is a guest of Mother Walker's.

"Well, Mother," said Lucy, after her ancient protégé had "righted" her cap, as she called it, just a trifle, and seated herself in her armchair by the stove, "how have you been this week?"

"I have been very happy, thank my good Lord. Yesterday was my wedding day" (it was her habit to remember and keep in her own way the anniversaries of at least two generations of her kinsfolk), "and all day I heard the chime of the bells when we were wed. And I saw the spring sunshine, and the larks in the air, and the hawthorn hedges not quite come out, and the priest in the chancel, just as though it was all now. Last night I dreamed I saw my father's cottage, and our family of boys and girls as they looked when they were ready for church. How green the fields were as we went across the Squire's land.

"And there was one tune we used to sing at prayers, which I heard asleep, just as plain as I hear my own tongue now. I was so glad, I cried, which waked me. All day I have been thinking, love, what a bright day it will be for me when we all meet again."

"You never told me much about your friends, Mother."

"No, love. It's not for them like me to tell young folks about sad things. I have been long alone here. My man died away off in Asia, and my boy — ah, my good Lord, — is dead among the heathen; at least, they told me so, and I have never heard of him for sure since he went to sea."

"Do you never hear from your old home?"

"No. Twenty years ago a man came from there,

and I went to see him, but he told me so many folks were dead that I thought all my people were in the graveyard. May they rise in the Last Day, love."

"Where was your home, Mother?"

"Southcote parish, Lincolnshire."

"Perhaps they have news of your son there."

"No; they are all dead, love, that knew me, and Johnny is dead, too. If he weren't he would have come to his old mother before this."

"But how should he know where to find you? Perhaps, after all, we might get news of him. We might write."

"Who to?"

"The rector of the parish. He would know, if anybody, and I am sure would be glad to answer you if he had any tidings."

The idea seemed to be new to the old lady, and to perplex her. She held her hand to her forehead as if thinking hard at the difficulty. Then she turned to Lucy. "But, love, who shall write?"

"I will, if you choose."

"But what will you write? And who do you expect will answer you?"

"Oh, a nice letter; but you must have faith, Mother. Somebody will answer us. Let me write down now what you tell me. What was your maiden name?"

"Mary Lancy."

"And what was your husband's name?"

"John Walker."

"These names are no doubt on the parish register, and I shall write them all to the rector, and if he can, you see, he will help us."

So Lucy wrote down all the names in her pocket-book.

"I will send the letter," she said. "Come, now, I interrupted your getting tea. We must have tea, you know." And Lucy Farewell lent a hand at the tea-making. Mother Walker produced two great white cups and a sugar-bowl from the cupboard behind the stove-pipe, with a couple of white plates to match, a broad, fresh loaf, and a little butter. Lucy set the table with a patched, but very white cloth, and brought forward a mysterious package in paper, which turned out to be a jar of currant jelly, which she knew to be greatly to the good mother's liking. Then when grace was said and tea was poured out of the brown earthen pot, the two ate their supper. "Ah, my love, I feel younger when you are with me," Mother Walker said at the tea-table. "I am alone so much that my mind grows stiff-jointed, but when you are here it's quite as though May-day had come."

"Well, then, Mother, I shall come often."

After the tea-things had been set away, and Mother Walker in her white cap had gone to rest

in her high-backed chair, Lucy Farewell sat down by the window, as the twilight came, to read out of what Mother Walker called "The Good Book." The chapter she read to-night was the sixth of St. Matthew, which contains the Beatitudes of our Lord. And as she read out of that great, vast, shadowy Book, simple in truth, infinite in meaning, which has been in all ages to Christians, food, strength, courage, hope, and light, and as she repeated those blessings of the All-Loving, which are not so much for the proud and the rich and the great of this world as for the poor, weary, and heavy-laden, it seemed as though a blessing had descended upon the aged woman, so still she was and motionless as Lucy read. Then followed the prayers; and as they two knelt down in the twilight, young and old — spring and winter, as it were — before the same Throne that guards all ages, and prayed to that Divine Tenderness which embraces with its benison all creatures, as His sunshine does, to the sceptic it might seem a very common misconception, but to the wise a most tender sacrifice and worship.

CHAPTER XII.

A MOTHER'S SURPRISE.

THE events of this chapter follow the last, a couple of months later on.

“God willing, and on Sunday morning next there will be public baptism in this church.” Such was the notice which the rector of St. Clement’s gave from the chancel the Sunday after Ascension. A few of his people gathered after service at the chancel rail to consult with their pastor about bringing their children to the font. These were mostly poor people, and to Mr. Ardenne, who knew their story, there was many a page of sober history writ in the group around him; for to the wise priest his parish is a curious book in which the most diverse and wonderful lessons are writ down in living characters. The rector in his week-day visits had already given such instruction as was needed to the right understanding of what they were about to do with their little ones in baptism, and now there were merely some few arrangements to be made as to the god-parents, who were present; and the minister having settled such matters with them in his quiet, fatherly way, the people soon took their leave.

Three persons stayed behind — Miss Lucy Farewell, Mother Walker, and a stout, middle-aged, English-looking man beside her.

“Ah, Mother, how are you to-day?” said the rector.

“Very well, thank you, my lord” (making a most antique curtsy); “the Lord has had great mercy on me of late. This is my son here, my lord, my long-lost son, come back to his old mother, bless him.”

The man thus introduced came forward with an awkward, sailor-like bow, and paid his respects to the minister.

“John wishes to be baptized, my lord.”

“How is it, Mother, that so good a churchwoman as you has never had your son baptized before?”

“Ah, my lord, it's all my own fault, but it's just this way. My husband and I went out as young folks a great way off, up what they call the Mederterranean, I think, to try and better ourselves. He was a good mechanic and had something to do with putting up engines on sugar plantations. He says to me, ‘Mary, we'll get aforehanded here, and then go back to dear old England and buy a bit of land and a cottage and live like a king.’ But ah, my lord, it was a dreadful country: no churches, nor ministers, and all the people thereabouts were heathen. Well, John was born; and I said to his father, ‘John,’—for the boy took his name,—‘John,

the dear little fellow must be baptized like a good Christian. There's no priest here, and you must do it, for I've heard say that in such cases folks like us may do it. But John held back; as it were he was afraid to do it, lest it might be a sin, for John was very careful in such things; but he said, 'O Mary, you just wait a little; when we get back to England we'll have Johnny baptized in the old parish church, where we were wed, and with Christian folks around us, for here it is all heathen.' Well, my lord, then I waited. Poor man, he never saw England more. He took sick of the fever, and all the nursing in the world wouldn't save him. He said as he lay sick, 'Mary, be sure and have the boy christened.' I says 'Yes, honey.' And all the time he was ailing his mind seemed to be running upon our old home as we had left. So he died, my lord, and if you would believe it, I was the only person who could say a word or read a prayer at his funeral. My heart, I thought, would break, but I couldn't bear that John should be buried like a dog, without a word, and so I read the service, and took the earth up in my hand (I recollect how black it was) and scattered it on the coffin, and said the prayers, while John here, the child he was, was held up in a black man's arms to see it all. You don't remember that, my boy. So I was left alone with the child. I had no money to pay my way back to England, and I had no heart

to go back. We two went down to the coast, where there were more white folks, to a place where foreign vessels came at times, and there, God be thanked, I got bread and work. I was handy with my needle, and some were kind to 'the Englander with her child,' as they called me. So Johnny here grew up. Ah! my lord, how I prayed that he might be a good child and take me back to England. But you know, my lord, boys are apt to go their own way, and Johnny, though he was kind and obedient, had always a love for the sea. So he says, "Mother, I wish to go a voyage, and come back rich to you, and then we'll go home," — he always called England home, you see. So I says, 'If it's the Lord's will, you must go, Johnny.' So he went, and never shall I forget that day. And always about my work, and especially nights and mornings, I prayed for him, that he might be kept safe and come back. But he never came back there. He was shipwrecked and then took by the enemy, that made a slave of him, while I, his poor mother, only heard he was dead. But I waited for him ten years where I was, and they was long years, my lord, and he never came back. Then I thought he was dead, and with his poor father gone I was nigh upon mad. Then I heard of America, and when a vessel came from there I went to the Capt'n, and I said, 'Capt'n, I want to go to America.' 'Who are you,' he says.

‘I am a poor woman whose man is buried up country, and my poor sailor boy is dead among the savages.’ ‘What can you do,’ he says. ‘Anything almost.’ So he took me for cook, like, and I came out. And here in this place, my lord, I have lived thirty years or so. And it’s only a week ago this night when this my boy came walking in to my house, just as though it was his home. ‘Who are you?’ says I. ‘I am your son John Walker,’ and he put his arms round me. It didn’t look like him, and he was much older like, and not at all as Johnny was, and I said ‘You are not he; he is dead in Afriky.’ But he said ‘No, Mother, I am alive,’ and then he told me some things correct of what we did among the heathen, where his poor father’s grave is. ‘Come here to the light,’ I said; ‘show me your cheek.’ And sure enough, under the whiskers, was the scar — Johnny’s scar — that he got from a heathen boy’s knife in the streets once; and then I knew him to be my son; and then, my lord, if you could have seen us two, Johnny and I. It was as though he had come back to me from the grave.”

“It is all true, sir,” said the son, who had been brushing the tears out of the corners of his eyes while his mother was telling her story. “It’s quite true, sir, and more than strange. I have been in very strange places, and been saved out of all. I was a slave once ten years among the Algerines,

and lived harder than a dog. When I was free I went back to her, but she had gone to America, they said, so I came here to this country. But how should I find her? It was like hunting for a needle in a haystack. So I went to sea again. I have had a hard life of it. I went into the navy latterly. When I was sick once with yellow jack, off the West Indies, I told the chaplain my story. I could write a letter, he said. I had learned to read and write a little, you see, sir, aboard a man-o'-war, and, though I hadn't it in my mind before, I wrote to the parson of the parish where my mother was wed, asking about her. And just then, it appears, as it was a miracle, that kind lady's letter," pointing to Lucy Farewell, "had come to him too, and he wrote me back where she was. So I came."

"From what shire are you, my man?"

"Lincolnshire."

"Yours is a very singular story. Mother, you should be thankful."

"Ah! I am that, my lord, you may be sure. Thankful am I that in my old age my boy is with me, and that he is to be baptized at last."

"Have you received any instruction as to what baptism means?" asked the rector.

"The old lady and I have been over the Prayer Book together, and I've studied it hard, and it appears to me that it's just what every man of us ought to do. I'm no saint, and never expect to be ;

but I've thought of these things in watch on deck, in storms, and shipwreck, and among savages. I have never been a very bad man, as you might think, — a regular decent man, though I say it, but I have never been a Christian. I never let a man starve on ship or ashore if I had bread to give him, and my money and I have parted many a time for a sick shipmate; but I know that alone isn't being a Christian. I am near forty-five, and I've been through a deal, and God has brought me safe so far; and when I see my mother, dear old soul, and think how after all we are here standing aside each other, I wish to thank God by serving Him. I'm afraid I can't be so perfect as I wish, but I shall try. I am ready to take the vows."

"Very well," said the rector, "I am glad of your happiness and of your intention. I will see you during the week at your home; and you, Mother Walker, now that your son is back again, I expect to find you the happiest person in the parish."

"Ah! my lord, I am very happy. It would be a sin in me not to be." And mother and son went forth from St. Clement's — home.

"Mother Walker has told so long a story that I cannot make the inquiries about your scholars that I wished, Miss Farewell. I will do so when I come over this evening to Miss Kendrick's." Saying which, the rector went to his robing-room to lay aside his vestments, and the other — Lucy — went home.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOLK-A PARSON FINDS OUT.

THE rector of St. Clement's was a thorough Churchman, and by some would have been called a bigot, or any other gentle name by which liberal people mark their esteem of Christians of another fold who choose to keep their vows. For as Mr. Ardenne was one of those men who had wit enough to see the drift and genius of that Church in which he was a priest, so he had honesty enough to accept that system in a grave obedience, which, while it did not abuse others, cherished unflinchingly its own. He had early learned the difference between liberality and indifference in religion; and as he knew that in such solemn matters as man's salvation a priest above all other men should have his opinions well defined, he had slight respect for any teacher who held or taught opinions loosely. In other words, he merely insisted, to use a military phrase, that every soldier who enlists should be loyal to his colors; a simple truth which some Christians ignore. He never shrunk from calling Christ's Church Catholic, not only because he and his congregation confessed as

much twice every Sunday in that Apostle's Creed which was as old as the Cross almost, but because that word "Catholic," as applied to Christ's visible Body, was the most significant. But he had too clear a brain not to see that Church folk cover themselves with shame when, boasting the privilege, they abstain from the duty which it involves. For while he believed in the Catholic Church, and in all contained in those mighty words, he also believed in her as the living and ever-busy steward of good things to men. For while some men cry in a proud conceit, "We are the Church," and fold their hands before the Cross, while men perish round them without religion, and they perish, too, cross-signed, Mr. Ardenne knew that the Catholic Church means work, instruction, charity, sacrifice, and whatsoever may make wiser Christian men. So, while he revered the instrument, he never forgot the work it was to do. In this way he had become the friend of the poor in Aubrey Parish. And when he kneeled down in the hovels beside the sick, amidst the waste and stain and penury, or read them comfortable words out of Holy Writ, he felt a tender gratitude rising in him that he was called to follow Him who forsook the angels to consort with such lowly folk as these. For him it was sufficient that the disciple should be as his Master and the servant as his Lord. He had a hand also in their temporal concerns, and

his were very anxious days when the millowners closed their shops and the poor went without work. Besides, twice a year, in Spring and Fall, he had to overlook the reclothing of the poorest children of the parish.

It was to inquire about certain of the children soon to be baptized that on the evening of the day whose events are recorded in the preceding chapter he went to Miss Mary Kendrick's. Miss Mary was a maid, but she was not young. She lived, moreover, in an old-time house which stood among the elms facing Aubrey Common. It had once been a stately mansion, as times went; and its ample roof—broken amidst into an obtuse angle of some sixty degrees or more, as though it had bulged out there under the weight of the snows of so many winters, or because its joints were too weak with age to keep it upright—had covered several generations of as good blood as was to be found in the parish. Its two rooms on either side the front door were square, but the rest were most singularly rich in angles, as though partaking of the humor of the mistress who lived there. They were amply supplied with cats, for which Miss Mary had a passion, which grew upon her with her age. She was a tall, lean, busy, bustling body, who knew every one and their great-grandfathers, and was a far better repository of the history of Aubrey folks than the town clerk's

register. She wore a wig, and her teeth were not old, but the tongue between them had all the vivacity of youth. Fifty years ago she had been a belle and had her turn at love-making and the thousand and one pastimes with which girls, young and handsome, amuse themselves. But her partners in the dance were long since gone, and the old hall where they danced on the hard pine floor in the frosty mid-winter nights had long since fallen to decay, as though to show sympathy with the mortal lot of its patrons. Yet while on the outside she grew dry and withered, her heart became gentle, like those pears which, growing rough outside, mellow at their hearts with all the juices and sunny flavor of the hazy autumn days. Truth to say, Miss Mary's nature, like her tongue, had two sides to it. She was always ready to lend a hand or fight a battle, and she stinted neither friend nor foe. She would watch all night with a neighbor and then fight all day for a friend, and though she had no stain of meanness in her warfare, it was of such quality that Aubrey folk, and, above all, women, were slow to invite her wrath. So she lived, if not in peace with all men, at least in a frank and open way—the most pronounced and ancient maid of Aubrey. Indoors and upon her premises everything was governed with great exactness, and in her garrets she had more old linen packed away in lavender or tansy than would have sufficed for half

the outfits of the marriageable folk in town. Her ancient china and silver spoons were actually famous among Aubrey gossips, and if an earthly Paradise be the place where there is no dirt, her house was Eden. In her house thrift followed economy and nothing was wasted. Yet in her generation she had fed many poor, and the tramps were always sure of a crust, at least, at her back door. Even her religion had a martial ring to it, and she fought for her Church with all the ardor of an ancient Confessor. A certain storminess of temper was hid for most folk behind her good deeds, and Mary Kendrick was not a woman to be lightly spoken of by any. She was Lucy Farewell's god-mother, and as such had received her, when an infant, into her household, and had been as a mother.

Mr. Ardenne found her at tea over the whitest tablecloth imaginable, while a wood fire blazed on the fat brass andirons. The minister took his seat at the table and proceeded to attend. For Miss Mary had such faculty of speech as is not always vouchsafed to mortals, and talking was a talent she never hid in a napkin, and whenever on earth she met her fellow-creatures, whatsoever the subject broached, her share of the conversation was at least one-half. Her tongue never showed signs of age, and its quality was so well known to the rector, that whenever he made his advent to Miss Mary's society he always began to listen.

“If poor folks were as slow to wear out their clothes as they are to work, or to save their money, there would be much less for honest people to do in St. Clement’s. There’s Widow Bates’ children: if you gave the girls velvet cloaks they would be sure to wash dishes in them; and as to the boys, whenever we fix them up they are sure to fall into the river the first day they wear their new clothes. They are always ragged, and I am always running there to see why they are not at church. I do believe they would have nothing to wear if a tailor’s shop was emptied into their den once a week. And there are the Hobsons, English folks. The only thing they are rich in is children and pigs, and I declare I think sometimes I like the pigs best, for they don’t bother me for dresses. I don’t see why people who have the most mouths to feed have the least to put into them. I wish I could stop this children business, or they’ll be the death of me, for this last fortnight it’s been nothing but calico and stockings and trousers for these weak Christians and I’m quite worn out with it.”

“I notice that you always recover from your fatigue, Miss Mary,” the minister said, “whenever there is a good deed to be done for these same people.”

“Well, so I do, but it comes tough often that I, who have never had any children of my own, should be troubled with other folks’. But it all

goes into a lifetime, maybe, and it's better to wear out than to rust out. And here is Lucy. I declare I have hardly caught sight of that child's face since Easter. When she's not begging old clothes from the neighbors, she's mending or fitting them with her head in her work-basket, and if I see as little of her for a month to come I shall need an introduction."

"You certainly have great misfortunes," said the rector.

"Yes; and they increase. I don't mind work, and I suppose I shall go on in the old way, running down to Mrs. Bates' or Mrs. Hobson's Monday mornings; but I mean to scold about it to my heart's content. I wouldn't like to take my pay in their gratitude. Do you know that the very last time I was there the oldest Bates girl whispered to her sister, loud enough for everybody to hear, that my wig was put on crooked, the hussy, and her brother, who is in Lucy's Sunday-school class, actually pulled the ribbons off her bonnet when she was teaching them the Ten Commandments!" After which oration Miss Mary proceeded to refresh herself with another cup of tea.

"I know," the rector said, "that much of the work we have to do for the poor is very vexing, and nothing more so than to try to dress up thriftless or thankless people; but ingratitude, I sometimes think, is a part of the curse of

poverty, and as such to be overlooked. But here, you know, we do not expect reward, and the thankfulness of some of the parish poor is actually overwhelming. A poor child brought me two apples as an Easter offering, and when she took them out of her pocket they looked to me as delicious fruit as a parson ever tasted. No! Miss Mary, the poor are like the rest of the world, some good, some bad, yet I think I have as often found true gentleness and kindness among them as among any class. At least we have this consolation, that when we feed the poor we allay the hunger of our Lord."

"Yes, but if the Bates would attend less to my wig, and a little more to mending their own dresses, I should be much better pleased."

The rector made no reply. When it was evident that Miss Mary's tongue had returned to its repose, at least so far as St. Clement's poor were concerned, he made his enquiries of Lucy Farewell.

She said, "The ladies of the parish have seen to dressing the children who are to be baptized, in the few cases where the parents are too poor to do so;" and she gave him a list of the names. Then when these matters were arranged and the tea things were removed, before the open fire the three chatted about such things as Christians may, far on into the evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PARTY AT RIVER NOOK.

"ARE you going to the prayer meeting or the party to-morrow night," asked Isabel Seaton of her neighbor, as a crowd of young men and women came pouring out of the basement room of the meeting-house, where a so-called "revival" had been for a week in progress.

"To the party, of course. I decided what to wear while Deacon Hobbs was making his last prayer — white with blue ribbons."

"And I — what a bore to dress in the country. Besides, the whole town, they say, is going to be there; and one's dress might come to grief in such a crowd. Yet one would like to make an impression at the bachelor's. Besides, the supper is to be elegant. I lost the good of the prayer meeting wishing that I could wear lavender as well as the stout brunette who sat just before us. When I go amongst ill-dressed people I always amuse myself redressing them according to the extreme mode. I am a great sinner, I know, but what does a woman live for except to dress and eat ices at a party now and then! And the country is so very stupid."

The speaker, Isabel Seaton, a stylish blonde of twenty or thereabouts, is a city belle, who after a winter of dissipation came in the spring to the country with her family to recruit for the next season's revels, and to grace Aubrey Parish with her rather exclusive society during the warm weather. She had found a new sensation in the revival to-night, and had improved it as she has told us.

Aubrey Parish was experiencing just now two sensations, a "revival" and a party. Religion at the meeting-house had been rather husky of late, but a series of protracted meetings had given it a new vivacity.

Besides, for the young folk there was the party. Now, there was a certain piquancy about this party, above some others, in the minds of Aubrey young ladies, due to the fact that it was given by a bachelor, Mr. Edward Vaughn, about whom there was much gossip.

It may be well to state at once who he is. Edward Vaughn, years ago, was a young man of promise at the College of X——. An heir and handsome, at graduation he had become a city beau, the gayest of the gay, to whom all houses were open, and was looked upon as one of the rising men of the metropolis. Suddenly, and why no one knew, he shut his house, and accepting an obscure consulate in the East, went abroad and

stayed some fifteen years. What little his old friends heard of him came to this, that he had become a great traveller and fond of visiting the most outlandish places, in a certain reckless way, as to how he fared or with whom he fraternized. The few of his countrymen who had visited him brought back very uncertain accounts of his way of living, and it was whispered that his habits in the East had been more than equivocal, if measured by severer Occidental standards. To one of them, a college friend who had ventured to ask him, in these foreign parts, why he came out to such a place, and perilled a brilliant career at home, he had answered with such a storm of passionate words that the enquiry was not repeated. He had come home as suddenly as he went, bringing a rare collection of antique things and curiosities.

At home he found everything changed. The girls he had danced with were now matrons with groups of children round them, and the men were married or become bachelors about town. The world he knew had passed on and left him behind to face a new generation. He had spent a few uneasy months in his old haunts, and then created a new sensation by suddenly precipitating himself upon Aubrey Parish, where he had settled as an absolute stranger. He had fancied the scenery on a chance journey through the town, and as the mood was on him he settled there. First of all, he

bought a wide tract of pasture land on the hillside, whence one looks up the valleys of the two rivers, and built himself a house there. It stood among elms and oaks, and in such wise as to be almost hid from the town folk, who were somewhat nettled by the reserve which kept him from asking their advice as to its plan or building. All the workmen and the material had been brought from the city, and not even the smallest trifle was ever bought in the shops of the town folk. Even the servants were from abroad, and one who had been so imprudent as to say to a town gossip that it was her master's orders that no word was to be said of what went on at River Nook (for so the place was called,) was sent back to the city the next day in disgrace. Stout iron gates, always barred except when the master or his people went in or out, excluded the town folk, who revenged themselves for the stranger's unsociability by the most diverse and ingenious guesses as to what he was and had been. Here, careless of all his neighbors, he had brought all his goods, and in three years' time he had ploughed and smoothed his pasture land into a green and well-kept park. Occasionally an old friend came from the city, but always with a written invitation, and few stayed long. For a man who was not obliged to work, the town's people thought him the busiest of men. With his gun or his rod, or riding hard on horseback, he was seen by them all

hours in the fields or roads on his own business, which he never saw fit to impart or discuss with them. Occasionally he was seen at the church or meeting-house. Sometimes he was absent for days with his yacht down the river. There were two things to be said in his favor. When times were hard in the winter, and the poor grew poorer, he had a way of sending from River Nook, by the hands of his foreman, both bread and fuel; and they told also of large monies scattered in the hovels. The only people he took notice of were the beggars and "the queer folks." Here and there through the town were to be found, as everywhere, unfortunates; men and women wrecked in the very fibre of their lives by birth or sickness, and grown askew and crooked; people in whom one often finds a rare but momentary wit fading out into unreason again, sparks of a holy fire, overlaid of ashes yet, reminding us that they too once were men like ourselves. These are called queer folk or crazy, and with them Edward Vaughn was sociable. He knew them all, and was never so much in a hurry that he could not stop a moment to greet them, or give them a trifle, when he met them in the roads or fields. These knew him, too, for their friend, and there was no service possible for their maimed natures that they would not have rendered him. Thus he had spent three years in Aubrey Parish, and was regarded by most

people as a strange or uncanny mortal who thought himself too fine or wicked to associate with them.

The acute surprise of Aubrey people may be imagined, therefore, when the proprietor of River Nook issued cards for his party. Cards they were, in the true human fashion, sent round to nearly all the young folks: and at the bottom was vouchsafed the information that there would be dancing. Of course there could be no mistake. There was to be a real party at the Nook. The news had different effects on different persons. It sent the young ladies forthwith to their wardrobes, and vast was the wit and labor which had been already spent in the arrangement of their toilettes for the coming fête. Some of the more surly and older townsfolk saw in it only another freak of their unsocial townsman, and predicted all sorts of uncomfortable results. The party had already seriously interfered with the revival.

The gates of River Nook were wide open. Curiously painted lanterns, hung from the trees, cast their colored lights through the fresh leaves upon the broad avenue that led to the house. Every room was open, and lighted with wax tapers. A band from the city waited on the verandah to welcome the company with music. Even the servants were dressed, by their master's order, with great exactness. Edward Vaughn awaited his guests. In due time they came, the most of them

as late as possible, since to manifest a polite reluctance to a host's society by coming at the eleventh hour is always considered by the wise to be well-bred. Several even took cold while watching from a dark room for the rest to go, that they might not be before their neighbors. Some came in those ancient and stately vehicles in which their grandmothers had gone to their wedding, and which were held of equal value with the family plate as evidences of pedigree,—carriages carefully dusted out and oiled that afternoon to bear their burden of aspiring young beauty to the party. The chariots of the millowners were mostly new and smelt of varnish, and a few of them had crests—not, as one would anticipate, a hammer resting on an anvil, or a water-wheel among stars, but very singular creatures, like birds or beasts, with Latin or Norman-French mottoes in the most pronounced style of ancient heraldry. There were also less mighty coaches, and a few of the young folk came leisurely down on foot. Mr. Vaughn received his guests with a cordial but rather stately manner, after the gentler sex had retouched its toilette in the dressing rooms, preparatory to the evening's play, or conquest, or whatever else goes on amongst mortals on such occasions. Until dancing began, all were to amuse themselves according to their taste, the host said, and the bright open rooms, with their elaborate furniture, invited not a few young ladies,

and every matron in the crowd, to examine the upholstery and housekeeping of the bachelor who had heretofore kept his doors closed to their curiosity. It was certainly housekeeping like no other in Aubrey Parish. Two giants in armor kept guard at the hall door. The mirrors were from floor to ceiling, the pictures profuse and from the most diverse schools, white marble statuary in the alcoves and corners, some of which was looked at with a quick side glance by the more proper people, as creatures too scantily clad for even a rich man's house; the house-clocks and candlesticks upon the mantels—in short it was the house of a man with both means and wit to furnish it. The more observant matrons remarked that the lace curtains had been lately ironed, and the carpets swept, while a few of the more practical spirits puzzled their brains to calculate what all this had cost. There was one frank young lady who assured her confidential friend that if she had the ordering of it she would put blue curtains outside the lace; though the half-wish behind the words was never gratified.

To describe a party is like counting sands or photographing moving clouds. Belles and beaux of Aubrey pattern, sentinelled by the more stolid elders; talk, jest, criticism, love-making; people in pairs, people in apology or distress, as they happened to be the sinner or the sufferer, in

somebody's toilette disarranged or rent by the unlucky catastrophes of mixed societies; people doling out their civilities to their neighbors through a very fine sieve of caution lest they should happen to speak too kindly; uncertain people, who expected every one to talk to them, and talked to no one, so self-conscious that they blushed and stammered when they spoke and yet were always wondering why the crowd passed them by for more easy partners; a curious, complex crowd, all after something and few to get more than their suppers or a to-morrow's headache and an opportunity to hatch more gossip and feud than could be laid asleep in the next twelvemonth — Edward Vaughn might congratulate himself that *his* party was in these respects a great success.

It was the custom of Aubrey society to thaw out by degrees; but to-night the hearty welcome of the house, which left them free to do what they would, broke through the crust of ceremony sooner than usual, and people were really enjoying themselves before dancing came on. Edward Vaughn acted the host after his own fashion, and very soon became tolerably at home with several. Certain fat ladies, with a vast breadth of satin round them, smiled upon him graciously, and truth to say he was civil to mothers and daughters both; going among his guests in a very quiet manner, and neither danced nor stayed long with any.

"Where is Blanche, my dear," said Madame Seaton to her daughter Isabelle, whom we met lately at the prayer meeting,—just as Edward Vaughn, having made the circuit of the rooms, came back to the library door, by which was seated Mrs. Seaton watching the dancers.

"Indeed, I don't know, Ma. She left me half an hour ago, saying she would go outdoors to get some fresh air. I dare say she is amusing herself looking at the moon."

"Have you seen my niece" (to Edward Vaughn), nodding the point-lace cap in a very stately manner at her host.

"I really do not remember your niece, madam, and from having met so many agreeable people for the first time to-night, my brain is a trifle confused as to names and faces. I will send a servant to search for her if you like."

"How should Mr. Vaughn know Blanche, Ma. I doubt whether he has ever seen her. He was arranging about the dances when we came, and Blanche, you know, said she would wait a little for an introduction, and I have hardly seen her since."

"Then my niece has not yet been introduced to Mr. Vaughn. It is a little rude in her, I'm sure. Belle, dear girl, be kind enough to find her and bring her to me. I very much wish Mr. Vaughn to know her."

"Indeed, madam, you pique my curiosity.

Will you be so kind as to describe your niece to me? I should be glad to hunt her up myself."

"Would you like a particular description," broke in Miss Isabel. "Well, then, a perfect blonde, some five feet eight; I don't know what she weighs; round, dimply hands; a dignified, fresh-colored lady. Now I have told you everything I know about her except her age; and an unmarried lady is always of no particular age, you know. O, I forgot; the lady wears to-night a crimson dress trimmed with lace (point, of course) and a solitaire on her marriage finger. It's as amusing as describing one for the police. Have I painted the lady for you, Mr. Vaughn?"

"Very cleverly, Miss Seaton, thank you. I will look about for her, and if I chance upon her, I shall say that a lady of twenty or so, blonde, blithe, below eight feet, with pearls in her hair and some very ancient lace over a white corded silk, a guest of mine, whom I hope often to meet, begs her attendance in the library. *Au revoir.*"

And with a bow Edward Vaughn went away, but for two reasons; first, that Madame might not fasten herself upon him for the rest of the evening, and next because he might as well consume his time in this way as any other. Besides, he had once been fond of blondes. First he took a stroll in the park among the lanterns. Here and there he found a couple *tête-à-tête* in the little

rustic retreats,—pagodas that he had seen fit to build among the trees,—but nowhere Lady Blanche. Then he went back to the dancers, who were too busy to mark his presence as he passed by them. She was not there. At a mere venture he passed on through the back hall to the greenhouse, which formed a part of the house, and by his order had been lighted to-night with lanterns. He opened the door. Before him, and with her back to him, was the lady in the crimson dress, looking at the white azaleas near her. She started at the sound of an opening door, and turned. Under the dim light she appeared as a stately blonde, dressed and featured as her cousin had said. Closely observed, and she had the bearing and look of a woman bred to the world, but with a certain half-veiled consciousness, hardly to be named boldness, as of one who has knowledge of many and even bitter things, and yet would wear the front of an artless and guileless womanhood. In after years Edward Vaughn thought of her as he remembered her that night—as he thought of those perfumed and leisure-loving Roman matrons under the Cæsars, who with their heathen culture proved how woman's elegance and beauty may not only divorce themselves from purity and honor, but sink still lower in the scale of ethics.

“Do you know me, Edward Vaughn?” she said in a low, distinct voice, standing still in her place.

"Pardon me, madam, your back is towards the light and I cannot see your face."

"Come nearer, then."

He came close to her, and they stood face to face. "Do you know me now, Edward Vaughn?"

He looked at her for a long time in silence, as men look, not so much through flesh and blood, as through years and ages and supreme moments that are also ages; and as he looked his face grew pale and the lips rigid as if the heart under them was turning to stone, and while he looked the woman before him moved not; not a muscle of the face nor the eyes that looked in his, nor even did she seem to breathe, so statue-like she seemed, waiting for him. When he spoke at last his voice sounded as though out of long ago, and from a realm where the very flame of a merciless justice, or wrath, whichever it might be, had blighted everything.

"Yes, I know you very well. You are the ghost of Blanche De Forest."

"Have you nothing to say to me, Edward Vaughn?"

"Nothing."

"Did you never love me?"

"Yes."

"Have you forgotten me?"

"Yes, I buried you."

"Yet here I stand before you."

"I tell you I buried Blanche De Forest twenty years ago ; not under the sea, for the sea gives up its dead, nor under the earth, for the earth and its graves shall be opened at the Judgment day ; but I buried her in a grave where the very dust and ashes became as it were annihilate ; since she died a suicide in a wrong which slew her soul. You call yourself Blanche De Forest. The woman whose name you wear perished, I tell you, years ago."

She approached her right hand to lay it on his arm. "Have you no mercy, Edward?" He drew back with a repelling motion. "Pardon me, madam, or whatever you are, you are my guest, and I wish to be civil. I beg to remind you that you are a stranger and a woman. It follows that you should maintain a woman's reserve. I do not know you."

The woman answered calmly again, "This is cruel, Edward Vaughn. You know me to be Blanche De Forest. You know that you loved me once. You know that for twenty years my life has been, not a blank (would to God it were), but an agony. You left me because you were proud, and of hot blood ; you made me a widow where I could not weep (and yet my heart wept blood) ; you went abroad and gave up your career, which you knew I wished and was proud to think of. You have shunned me and my family, even to its distant branches, ever since. You have buried

yourself alive away from everything. I confess the wrong I did you. I confessed it twenty years ago. Have you no mercy? Do you never pray for mercy? If God has pardoned me (and I believe I have paid him with the coin of more than my heart's blood), will you not pardon?"

"You speak of Blanche De Forest. I repeat I buried her years ago. I do not understand your right to question me. Are you her ghost? What are you?"

"Edward Vaughn, you had a man's heart once, and a man is never cruel to a woman defenceless and abased. Look at me. Is it not bitter enough for me, think you — a woman — for me to seek you out in your own house and tell you what I have? Will you make me drink the cup to the last dregs? Ghost or flesh, and I have come here to speak to you."

"Ghost or flesh, then, if you wish it, I will answer you. But come," he said, "this is too public a place for a man to discuss such pleasant matters with one like you. We may be interrupted any moment. Will you come with me?"

"I am not afraid to go with you, Edward Vaughn, to the gates of the charnel-house at midnight. Have you forgot the young girl (happy, then, thank God) who held in her hands the target for you to practise your rifle shooting with?"

"Blanche De Forest had courage.

"But come now," he continued, "you say you are a living creature of flesh and blood, like the rest of us. I say you are a ghost, or something worse. You ask me something. I have a fancy. Ghost that you are, or woman that you may be, allow me to make you an offering before we go. This is a carnival night in my house. You wear no flowers. You are dressed too plainly, lady. Allow me to dress your hair with a few flowers, whosever bride you are."

The woman kept her place, but did not answer. "Here are orange flowers, bridal," he went on, "but then you may be a ghost, you know; and I would not have the flavor of the grave wrought into them; and here are white camellias, in a blonde's hair no trifle; my mother wore camellias at her wedding. Not them. Well, here is heliotrope; and just one passion flower, not too broad, and gay a trifle, — allow me to offer these. Bend down your head." A proud head bent down without a word, but the red blood throbbed in her temples almost audibly. He entwined the flowers into the blonde hair, and the proud head rose up again.

"I am waiting for you, Edward Vaughn," she said.

"Come, then."

She followed him to the end of the conservatory farthest from the dancers. He took from his pocket a key, and unlocked a door. They passed

out into the night air. The strains of music and the feet of the dancers were heard indoors, and without were the cool, pure stars rising to the zenith.

"This way," he said, and she followed him. He took the path that turned to the left. It brought them in a few minutes' walk to what seemed a broad, high house of brick, without windows. It had one door. A second key opened it.

"Enter," he said, and they went in. He locked the door, and replaced the key in his pocket. The room in which they found themselves was lighted from the top by daylight. Now, at the further end a single lamp seemed hung low down from the ceiling. It was a singular sort of museum of quaint things. The floor was vacant; but round the sides were ranged in order a grotesque and even ghastly medley. Wooden idols from India; knights in armor; here and there a skeleton; battle-axes and swords of all shapes and legends made into curious emblems; military harness and clothing hung from pegs; stone axes and mortars from Norway; a bow and quiver of arrows;—a thousand things, apparently of all climes and races, were there. The two passed up the vacant floor to the lighted lamp. Under it, upon four stout stones, rested a sarcophagus of red-flecked Egyptian granite. The stone lid was off, and its place was occupied by a covering of glass.

Then Edward Vaughn turned to the woman with him.

“You say you are Blanche De Forest. She died twenty years ago. You are something. I said — a ghost. Whatever you are, you dare to speak for her?”

“I do.”

“Well, then, I will answer as if to her. I do not mind answering to annihilation, for the novelty of the thing. Go on.”

“I will go on. I ask you, Did you not love me once?”

He laughed outright.

“Come,” he said, “look down there. Under that glass is an Egyptian mummy; a woman, like you, the writing says. Look at the place where the eyes were; at that black parchment of the shrivelled skin; and the yellow dead hair over it; look at the swathed hands and arms laid in that rest of three thousand years. Is not that woman dead enough? Yet she is not so dead as Blanche De Forest is. She is not even the dust and ashes of a dead mummy. The death she died consumed the very dust and ashes.”

There was no answer.

“Yes, I did love Blanche De Forest once,” he went on; “I loved her more than man or woman, more than God. She intoxicated my very soul with love. All the music and beauty of this world,

the very stars of God, centred themselves in her ; and without her not even the desert, only the nothingness that destroys the desert, and leaves a man — itself. I would have braved toil, blame, agony — everything but shame — for her. I would have died for her as a man may die, facing fire, flood, battle, the very flame out of the skies ; more than that, I would have been blotted out of being, and my last thought as I passed forever to extinction should have been hers. She destroyed herself, not me, and left me nothingness. With that I cannot be even angry. I may stand beside my enemy's grave in wrath ; but with a thing annihilated I cannot even console myself by quarrelling."

"You do not hate me, then, Edward Vaughn?"

"I do not hate you."

"You forgive me?"

"I cannot forgive you. You do not even exist for me to forgive."

"This is not true. I stand close to you before your eyes. I speak to you. I tell you who I am. I identify myself by telling you what you and I only know, and yet you say I am not even a dream. I am a nothing. Is not this trifling?"

"Not at all. Suppose God (I wish to say it reverently ; for, though I have not a shade of piety about me, I am too wise to wish to insult the Master of my destinies) — if God were to do something plainly against our human and right conceptions

of Him — be unjust, for instance — you might say that He still existed ; but yet He would have perished out of this world's respect, and ceased, by this world's conscience, to be. Say I loved you. By your own act womanhood perished in you, all that I had loved in you. I loved you — soul, not body. You wrought suicide upon your soul. I might pray, I might even die for you. I could not restore you to life again. I do not wish to be cruel. I have never spoken these twenty years of you to any. I do not charge the worst things on you. I will not go through the story. You and I know it. Know that what I worshipped perished before my eyes. I did go away. My life has been a shipwreck. I have been mere dust and ashes in the balances of great actions. The Universe is to me a rent house framed out of skeletons, that may fall any day, and I forehear the clatter of the bones. The temple has perished with the idol."

"Have you no forgiveness, Edward Vaughn?"

"I have answered that question already."

The woman lifted herself to her full height, and looked at him. She was not young, but still a queenly woman, who might have graced a throne. Her bosom rose and sank with the great emotion. She held out both her arms towards him without moving from her place. The solitaire upon her marriage finger gleamed with a strange brilliancy — her engagement ring, and he knew it.

"I ask you, Will you come to me, Edward Vaughn?"

"I will never come to you, Blanche De Forest."

"I summon you with my heart, true and loyal to you, to come to me."

"Between me and you there is a great gulf fixed. I did not fix it. I cannot pass it."

The woman bowed herself down upon the marble over the ashes of her Egyptian sister. There were no tears, not a sob or word, but the bent woman — golden tresses above the dead mummy locks, living flesh over the dead dust — first greatly moved with agony, grew calm as if in prayer. Then, after the long unbroken silence, she rose up again, pale, firm, and looking straight into Edward Vaughn's eyes. She motioned with her right hand towards the door. She went before him. He unlocked the door, and they passed out. On the stone steps they halted. The pale stars had reached the zenith. She looked up to them. Then she said, in a low Sibylline chaunt, thrice, not as though to be heard of men, but as if to God, these words, "Forever, never; never, forever." And the stars, looking down upon the dust and ashes that suffered so, made no answer. But One above the stars, and who created them, had answered long ago, "Woman, thy sins be forgiven thee;" and holy men moved of the Holy Ghost had written down from Him this great beatitude:

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

They went toward the house in silence, the woman leading the way. As they came to where the path divided into two, she stopped. "Go on," was what she said. Edward Vaughn went past her, and then she turned down by the artificial lake which came up close to the rear of the house to the left. There were no questions asked between them. He made his appearance in the hall door just as the dancers, tired out with their sport, were scattered about in groups waiting supper. He had been missed by several, and there had been diverse guesses as to his whereabouts. "Ladies," he said, bowing to the groups of young folks that half-stared at him as he came in, "have you finished dancing? I am a busy man to-night, and have been obliged to overlook some things out of doors. The house is yours, you know, and I beg you to amuse yourselves in it in your own way. I make but a poor hand entertaining company, for I am out of practice."

"Oh, we have amused ourselves, Mr. Vaughn," said several.

"Have you found Cousin Blanche?" said Miss Isabel Seaton, emerging from one of the groups.

"Found her? Certainly."

"Where, pray?"

"Oh, somewhere in the world and under the

stars. Excuse me. To be more definite, I found her in the conservatory, just six feet from the door, looking at my white azaleas."

"But where is she? Did you leave her where you found her?"

"She? Oh, she flew away from me,—an angel with wings, of course. But come, I must report myself to madam. Will you take my arm?" and he offered her his arm with a very elaborate bow indeed.

She took his arm and said: "What do you think of Blanche?"

"Think! she is charming, adorable, a magnificent blonde. Allow me to praise one woman to another. You remind me of her, only you are younger. Besides, she refuses all my addresses. So I shall count myself in luck and devote myself to you; that is to say, if your majesty will consent to be queen to a new vassal."

"Gentlemen say always what they mean, I know, and of course I believe every word of that nonsense. But here is Ma waiting for you.

"Mr. Vaughn has found Blanche, Ma."

"I have indeed found the lost lady, your niece, madam, and a rare creature she is. I find her to have a philosophical mood, and we had a charming talk about the mysteries of the Universe; a trifle too austere, perhaps, but for me, charming. I congratulate you upon your niece."

"But where is Blanche?"

"Your niece seems to have a smack of romance about her, and I could not persuade her to come indoors. She went down the avenue, I fancy, to watch the stars, in an astronomical mood, maybe, or to catch the breath of the night air on the fresh leaves of the elms, or perhaps to meditate a poem, tragedy, or comedy, who knows. A woman, madam! You may count stars, or weigh sunshine, or box up the chemical forces of light, or do any other subtle labor, but who weighs or knows a woman. Her ways are past finding out. If you will take it as a compliment, I will add that the lady is a little odd."

"Blanche is odd," said madam, "and used to have her own way, but this behavior I can't understand."

"At any rate, as she seems to be of age, and there are no ogres or ghost knights on my premises to consume or carry her away to their enchanted castle, we may as well let her alone to enjoy herself. This is Liberty Hall to-night."

"But come," he said, as a demure, middle-aged servant came and whispered something in his ear, "Supper, they say. Allow me, madam, to offer you an arm, and you, Miss Seaton another," and sandwiched between age and beauty Edward Vaughn, the proper saintly man, led the way to supper.

“Allow me, madam, to offer you this chair next the sideboard; an old chair of my grandmother’s housekeeping, by the way, one of the few family relics I have; and you, Miss Isabel” (in a lower tone), “please stand here by me while these people are duly fed.”

Whatever else Aubrey folks might lack, they never wanted an appetite; and with a crush and crumpling of gauze and satin, and blushing with the heat, as in supper rooms they always do, the multitude were fed. Mr. Vaughn looked to the serving his guests, interspersing his labors with remarks to Miss Isabel, beside him.

“How do you like my guests, Miss Seaton?”

“I know very few of them. Very nice people, I dare say — a little countrified. I really haven’t taken the pains to see.”

“Exclusive, my lady, a little, ah? Bred to something different. Very well, it won’t harm you to breathe the same air an hour or so; do you suppose they are fed yet?”

“The tables look like it, but how should I know how much people eat? You should consult your housekeeper.”

There was an expression on the host’s face very like a grin. “Housekeeper!” he said, “that is what I lack and what I want. This is a regular hermitage,—not a woman in it. My French cook is nearest it, for I believe he would cut his throat

if the soup were burnt, and it takes the whole house to keep him in sorts."

"Is it so very difficult to get a housekeeper? Advertise and pay well. Ma could furnish a half-dozen for you."

"The housekeeper I want I won't pay for. She must come as a Sister of Charity, without money and without price. Quite from love of the thing, you know."

"It will do you no good to advertise with those terms in the bill."

"But I have advertised already, and I mean to keep advertising."

"When you get one, be so kind as to introduce her to me, will you? I hate housekeeping."

"Certainly. And now will you dance with me?"

"What? I did not understand."

"Excuse me. As a very old gentleman, you will allow me to remark something. Several of my very kind guests are watching us two. When a gentleman asks you anything, never allow yourself to bend towards him, as though you cared a trifle for what he said; and you are doing that. Be rigid, ice, anything, before the gossips."

"Most venerable ancient master, I obey you. What did you ask me?"

"I asked you to dance with me. I have not danced to-night."

“Will your age permit it?”

“I am not certain.”

“Then I will it. Yes. I will dance with you.”

It was late when they returned to the dance, and many who had been fed had gone, but a few unconquerable spirits made ready to dance again as Mr. Vaughn led in Miss Seaton, while the few dowagers and idlers who still remained grouped themselves about the doors to watch the dance. The two, as they stood together, were a marked pair. Edward Vaughn, though not young, was still a tall, broad-shouldered, brown-haired, firm-featured man of about forty, maybe. His face was that of a man who had lived well and thought hard somehow, so that his brain under the broad forehead had stamped down the traces of good living beneath a look of intellect and culture. Otherwise, upon a closer view, his face pronounced and deeply lined, yet covering generally the thought behind it, reminded one of those ancient manuscripts where one writing blots out another, and various scribes have erased or blurred the more ancient legends for their own inscriptions. Both his look and manner would have puzzled most men and women. He was bland or curt as the mood was on him. A soft-worded man, who somehow impressed you with a sense of the tiger in him, and to those who knew him most a riddle, of whom they could not tell whether he laughed or scorned.

A man whom most women would be half-afraid of, and whom only a very singular woman would find it easy to really love. Isabel Seaton was young in all but her heart; and that had aged beyond her years in the atmosphere of a city's dissipation. But the wisdom which waited on her age was of that sort which is never over fresh or pure; while some of the more subtle elements that dwell in the heart of maidenhood had become a little soiled and wilted, as the late violets always wilt in the June sun. To be just, she was always well bred and dressed, and when the waltz was ended, and, aglow with the excitement and music of the dance, she stood proudly by his side, she was indeed a beautiful creature, and of the angels that are bred in ball-rooms. "How very like Blanche De Forest twenty years ago," he thought.

Meanwhile Madame Seaton had made inquiries for her niece. She had come in and gone to the ladies' dressing-room, a servant said, while the guests were at supper; and one of the coachmen had met a person answering her description half-way to town. It was not a little strange. So, shortly, the party broke up. The host led the Seatons to their carriage. "Remember," he said as he closed the door; and the blonde answered with a nod and a smile her "Yes."

The two ladies kept silence till almost home.

"A delightful man, is he not, Belle?"

“Who, Ma?”

“Mr. Vaughn.”

“I dare say, but a little conceited, as all men are, and old, you know.” Then both lapsed into silence again, and under the cloaks one heart heard the question that had been put to it, lip to ear, in the whirl of the dance. “When may I come to see you?” and knew the answer: “Any time.” It was wise to remind her mother that Edward Vaughn was old. Mrs. Seaton found that her niece had come safely home and was in her chamber. At the breakfast table next morning Blanche De Forest came very near a lecture. But she stopped it by saying in an emphatic manner, “I did not like the company and came away. Please do not trouble me about the trifle;” and the three women ate breakfast and dropped the subject.

Edward Vaughn, after the guests were gone, went up to the smoking room with a young friend who had come up from town to spend a week with him.

“Well, Frank, how have you enjoyed yourself?” said the elder, as the two in easy chairs confronted each other beside the fire of cannel coal which was fast going out in ashes.

“Excellently well, Vaughn. I think these country girls are fresher than our ladies. I have seen a dozen at least very pretty. How have you fared?”

“Fared? I hate parties.”

“Why then, in the name of all the gods at once, did you have one?”

“Why? Because I took the fancy — for a change — to amuse myself. I wanted to see if the women hereabouts were like all the rest. They are. I vow I hate all women.”

“All, Vaughn? It didn’t look very much like it when you were waltzing with the blonde.”

“But I do, the blonde to the contrary. You were with me, I think, Frank, among the Marionites in Lebanon. You remember I offered to buy for ten thousand piastres the sheik’s youngest daughter. You know the offer was much talked about among the tents, and how vehemently the old man declined my offer. But you never knew how that same daughter, a mere child at that, fifteen or so, sent me word by an old hag that very night that if I would mend my offer two thousand piastres more, papa, she thought, would sell, and that she, moreover, had always liked the Franks. I did not want her at any price, for Syrian women are too afraid of cold water for my taste.”

“But what has that to do with the matter, Vaughn?”

“Merely this: that whether among the sheiks of Lebanon or my elms, women are about alike, — a little crooked and sometimes worse.”

“You are not orthodox on that point.”

“They are not orthodox on several points, Frank.”

“But you like the blonde, though?”

“Like her? Well, if you insist upon it, I adore her.”

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER THE PARTY.

IN this history of Aubrey parish, grave things and gay are mixed together. The reason is that life is likewise mixed. The dancers confront the prayers. The temples not seldom are neighbors to the shambles.

The day after the party at River Nook two men knocked at the door of St. Clement's rectory. They were the Reverend Carlos Lefingwell and Deacon Hobbs, the two chief dignitaries of the meeting-house. They found Mr. Ardenne in his library. The latter, though a little surprised at the novel visit, especially from Deacon Hobbs, greeted them cordially, and they proceeded to business.

"We have called upon you, Mr. Ardenne," the minister said, "at the desire of some of our people, to ask you to take part in the religious exercises which we are carrying on at present. I am aware that your clergy are not in the habit of doing so, and I am not quite sure myself that we can mix such matters; but my people wished it, and I have therefore come."

“That may be what our parson came for,” broke in Deacon Hobbs, “but it is not all of it, as I understand it. It has been thought best by some of us, Mr. Ardenne, considering the present dearth of the land in this locality and the abundant outpouring of the Spirit in the pleasant places of Zion at our meetings across the green, to call upon you and present you with an invitation, hoping you might feel it to be your duty to be present on these occasions; and I am empowered by the brethren to invite you to make such remarks at the aforesaid meetings as may be for the edification of the assembly. And furthermore, it has occurred to me in my meditations to bring to your notice a shocking instance of depravity, such as the children of this world, who are wise, as the Bible tells us, in their day and generation, are often guilty of. It has transpired that there was a very godless party last night at a certain Mr. Edward Vaughn’s across the river, where they had dancing and carousing to a very late hour; and I am compelled to say that not only were some of our own young people there, for which the elders will call them to a righteous account, but a large number of your parishioners, and it has occurred to me to suggest to you whether under the circumstances it would not be well for you to deliver next Sunday a discourse against dancing, and to exhort the ungodly to avoid this snare of the devil and to

flee from the wrath to come." Deacon Hobbs was famous for his orations. He usually said nothing, and used a deal of words to say it.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Ardenne, when the Deacon had finished, "here are several matters which you have been so kind as to bring to my notice; and though I have no wish to engage in a discussion—it usually does no good,—I have not the slightest objection to talk these matters over with you, provided it can be done in good nature. Am I to understand, then, that I shall not give offence if I tell you the principles by which we are governed in all such matters?"

"Certainly," said the minister.

But before we listen to Mr. Ardenne, we will look at his visitors. The Rev. Carlos Lefingwell was a young man with a thin, gentle, scholarly face and a habit of stooping when he walked, as students often have. His was a pure and truthful nature, that grace had wrought upon. His religion had been clarified and softened in its passage through a broad and gentle heart, so that when it appeared to men one missed a certain flintiness such as his more ancient brethren showed. His very learning (for he had that) made him tolerant of those elegant arts which his elders flouted, and, broken away as he was from antiquity, there were many things therein which he admired. But his religion was still Puritan. This showed

itself in a certain reckless disregard of time or circumstance when he undertook to plant among men what he thought to be germs of truth,—as though one planted roses in winter or on a rock because roses are always beautiful. He loved truth with a fervent, constant love and set out to follow it, as one follows a star across country, minding neither ditch, nor precipice, nor river that lies across his path.

He showed a certain Transcendentalism by declining form and establishment in religion, leaving Faith to be grasped out of an atmosphere, and this, too, in a world where all life contains itself in form, from plant to man, and proceeds by ordinances. In this he was like his elders, who were always leaving religion in the air, in spite of the fact that man walks with two feet on the earth, and subsists physically and spiritually by what is brought to his complex nature in fixed and minutely ordered conduits from a reservoir.

The rector and himself had long been friends, and were drawn together by a certain tie of a common human nature, which, while it does not laugh at creeds, is yet that more ancient charity which sees in all pure souls a white, shining brotherhood of man. And though they had often disputed, as Christians may, some question of theology, neither their words nor hearts had ever any flavor of bitterness; and when, after their talks,

Mr. Ardenne in his study had gone over it all again, he had often prayed that in the Hereafter they two, without any partition wall of difference, might meet once more in the Great Home where the same charity blends all into one family.

Deacon Hobbs was a very different man. He was a broken cistern that held only the dregs of his religion; and in all religions there are of course dregs, but in this man there was nothing else. A lank, bony hulk of a man, with a slouching, schoolboy's gait and coarse, hard face, with grayish eyes, prepared one to find in him a coarse-grained, mismade nature; and his looks were the only thing about him that never lied. He had had several wives, and frequently expressed the fear that he should survive them all, as he counted their graves in the burying ground with no more feeling than though they had been hills of corn. Yet he was always talking of the privileges of woman, and starving his female mill hands with the meanest pay. His honesty was that which escapes the law, but steals, against mere moral justice, every chance it gets. His charity was such as gave large sums in places where the public press would sound it to the world as given by Deacon Hobbs. His temperance was of such lofty order, that when a foreign artist freely sang in a charity concert to improve the graveyard where his wives rested from all their labors, the bottle of wine the former

drank at the Deacon's table was charged to the graveyard corporation, since he would have the world to understand he never meddled with the unclean thing. Yet he always had a hankering after the sourest cider, and turned an honest penny by making toddy sticks to assist the vices of a sinful world. By nature he was a very earthy man, and by grace working on such a scanty soil as his, very like a desert. There were no juices in his piety, but that was always wooden and emitted a creaking noise whenever it was put to proof, as a crazy house sounds with the wind blowing through it; yet his were the longest prayers of any. He was severe upon his neighbors' sins, and in the meeting-house, where he held a sort of lay episcopate, he was fertile in advices as to how they all should behave. When he began to exhort the ungodly went to sleep, and when he stopped the religious sung a psalm to deepen their devotions; and everywhere that human speech was possible his genius compelled him always to be always talking. His oratory, never select, was ever endless, and, like a circle, ended where it began—in itself. In short, he was what no religious man ever was, and what few honest, open sinners would ever descend to be; one of those grotesque mortals suffered to dwell with men to keep them back from too much happiness.

Such were the two men in Mr. Ardenne's library.

“You have asked me, in the first place,” continued the latter, “to join in what are called revival services; and I wish to show you why I cannot do that. I cannot do it because it is against the genius of our religion, and whoever crosses the spirit of his own creed has gone astray towards disaster. You believe in revivals; we do not, at least as the word is used, but rather in a revival which attends a Christian from his cradle to his grave. I do not wish to say that revivals do no good, for I do not know what mercies in what unusual ways God may bestow on men; but only that they are based on an idea which is not ours. By revivals you seize upon a man’s mind with a sudden wrench and haul him—God’s grace, as you say, assisting him and you—into the ark. Our way is less violent. The Church, in her province, does what the earth does in hers. The earth nurtures the germ hid in her bosom up to the blade in spring, and through all the summer brings it to the full ear in fall. So the Church takes the germ of a soul to her bosom, and through its seasons here feeds it for immortality by sacraments and services that educate it for eternity; as the blade is fed by juices from below and sunshine from above. Everything is silent, patient, in her methods, as the corn and the vines grow without break or murmur. In spirit as well as matter things that grow slow grow sure. Yet she is no

more indifferent to man's spiritual good, because she will not patronize so-called revivals, than God is to the harvest because He leads the grain through six months before it ripens, and will not create the corn in a single hour. I do not expect," he added, "you gentlemen to think as I do; but to admit that our systems are clearly different."

"I certainly do not agree with you," said Mr. Lefingwell; "but as you were asked to state your position, it was right for you to do so."

"I am very well aware," replied the rector, "that you have your own view and can defend it. I merely wished to answer your question."

"But how as to dancing?" interposed the Deacon.

"I was about to speak of that. The general question which lies behind yours is a rather wide one, and about it, I suppose, we disagree. We all confess that every man's duty is to live as a Christian. But how is that? Some thought, long ago, that the model Christian was a man who sat forty years upon a pillar forty feet above ground, and never once pared his nails; and a species of that sort of piety has trailed itself down through the ages of the Church. We call it asceticism; and it undertakes, by mortifying the flesh, to sanctify the spirit in us. Like every other phase of religion appearing in diverse ages, it has a measure of truth in it, which is, that our bodies are to be

brought in subjection to our souls, while pure asceticism would annihilate the body for the sake of the soul, which, as I take it, is murdering one half of a man that the other half may live. The Church says the world is good, and the soul purified by grace is good, but the one is servant and the other master, and the soul is to use the world for its own growth in piety. Some men in a fever can live without food, as some men in a delirium of so-called religion can live self-absorbed and despising to touch common cares or pleasures; but fever is never healthy, neither that religion. If God could have all men wholly live for Him, men would not be found hermits in caves, nor forever prone before altars, but men living in the world, ploughing, weeding, reaping, trafficking, feeding their children, and keeping their households. The Kingdom of Grace makes no war of extermination upon the things of this world, but only directs how to use and rule them. Our blessed Lord told the Roman soldier how to behave in his post, but he never told him to desert it, neither did the Apostles keep back their converts from any honest craft. And as these teachers left men in the world, to work there for the glory of God and their own spiritual weal and wealth, so does the Church. She says to us, 'Use the world for God and your soul's health.' Now you ask me whether dancing is evil. Suppose you had asked me if eating

was evil. I should answer, 'Under certain conditions, yes;' as when a convalescent brings back his sickness by gorging himself with forbidden meats when the nurse's back is turned, or when a man destroys his health by gluttony. Yet it is right to eat. Everything that God hath made has its place and use — even poisons. The sin is from misuse. I can only tell you that the Catholic Church has never as yet anathematized men who danced, or sang, or played upon the guitar, simply for doing so, though all such pleasures seem remote from serving God, and though she has never ceased to warn men against a worldly and trivial life. You can lay down no general rule, but the Christian will do nothing to hurt his soul, and nothing will hurt his soul that does not hinder him from serving God and man. There may be worship in work, and there may be the devil's work in what men mistake for worship, as when the Pharisee goes up to the temple to be seen of men, or a man's litanies are at the heart of them mere sound. I may eat my dinner in a spirit that worships God, and I may say a prayer so as to insult Him. I should say, then, that the Christian is one who so lives in this world as to honor God and serve mankind. Protestant asceticism, in my judgment, is less logical than the Roman, and both err against human nature, and so against God."

"But you yourself keep Lent," said Mr. Lefingwell.

“Certainly ; and because the Lenten abstinence may aid our spiritual growth. But not because worldly things are evil, but because the constant use of any good thing may mislead to evil we break in upon the world with Lent, to give a breathing place for meditation and special devotions. The Church does the same thing, indeed, through her order of feasts and fasts of the Christian year. The Church has her Lent, indeed, when she says a man should abstain from these common things according to his ability, and give his mind more wholly to spiritual things. That she would regret to see Lent a year long is clear from the fact that she ends Lent at Easter with a feast. In other words, we hold that human nature has its own specific gravity, which we try not to erase but manage. Indian corn, for instance, has its own normal height in growing, and so has at least the average human soul. Men like Bernard or Ambrose no doubt reach a higher level, but then we call them saints. Men are not angels, but remain as Christians at the human level ; though angels, even in this world, might attain spiritual heights which we never reach. The Church never attempts the impossible.”

“I have observed,” remarked Deacon Hobbs, rising from his chair and drawing his august person up to its full height, “that you speak of yours as the Catholic Church. Your church is known

in civil law, if I am not very much mistaken, as the Protestant Episcopal Church."

"Very true; and if you will be seated, I will explain all that, since it is part of the main question. A thing may be more than its name, or a name more than the thing. The former is true of our Church. Men might have called it the Church of Thirty-nine Articles, three orders, and two creeds if they had fancied so; but the name would still have been less than the thing. I am reminded when I hear our current Church name of a grotesque confusion of language in expressing a curious fact of vegetation, viz., that a blackberry is red when it is green. We are Protestant; we protested three hundred years ago, and still protest, against Roman rule and dogma; but we are also an existent Church, since we have existed ever since; and we are a Church of the Occident, since we exist in the west; and so to the end. But this is nothing in point. The heart of our Church is that she is Catholic."

"Roman Catholic," suggested Deacon Hobbs, "I can understand, but Catholic I can't."

"Very like, and perhaps you would understand no better if I took an hour or so of your time to explain it, as you would hardly wish to have me do."

"But you talk of the ancient Catholic Church," urged the deacon. "I thought your Church be-

gan with Henry VIII., three hundred years ago."

"That is exactly what I wished you to say; for in this conversation I have meant that you should see one simple thing, and that is, that the whole drift and genius of the Church differ from yours. You say we began with Henry VIII. It is a question of fact to be proved or disproved like any other. I say we began with Jesus Christ."

"Allow me to ask," said Mr. Lefingwell, "what Church existed in England before the Reformation?"

"The Catholic Church, under Roman rule."

"What after the Reformation?"

"The Catholic Church."

"What is the difference?"

"Rome."

"In the mediæval ages they had a habit of bandaging new-born babies so that they could move neither hand nor foot; but no matter how many or what wraps went on, it was still the same child beneath. And Rome in mediæval times had bandaged and swathed about the English Church — Christ's child in England — until it seemed at death's door. The Reformers tore off the bandages, and behold the same child has been growing ever since. If I remove the bandage I do not remove the child, and what I find beneath is no changeling."

The Deacon said nothing. He was long since thoroughly disgusted with what he heard, most of which he did not understand. Mr. Lefingwell said as he rose to go, "I most heartily disagree with much that you have said. Some things are reasonable. Every man must take his responsibility, and I do not wish to meddle with your conscience." And the two parted with courtesy. Deacon Hobbs forgot to make his bow. He had been looking round the library to discover a crucifix.

"A milk and water Roman Catholic," he mumbled as he went outdoors; and Mr. Ardenne resumed his studies.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIRST FLOWERS.

ONE man and a Newfoundland dog stood upon the steps of the Seatons' country house on the afternoon of the next day after the party, and the two, when the bell was answered, entered it. Then Edward Vaughn and his brute friend were ushered into the parlor, and while the man amused himself with looking at some of Landseer's hunting pieces hung on the walls, the dog made himself comfortable on the rug before the grate. Mr. Vaughn had asked for Miss Seaton, and in due time, with a rustle of silk on the stairs, that damsel appeared.

"Welcome to Seaton Hall," she said, as she gave him her hand.

"You must know, Miss Seaton, I have made this call on foot, and I find it a very short road from home. Now I have found the way and the lady of the castle, I trust to be allowed to wear out a whole kit of boots in your service."

"You have certainly a very singular way of declaring your gallantry to a lady. I trust the boots you speak of will not seriously damage your exchequer. If so, you can always appeal to my charity, you know. Please be seated."

"But first allow me to introduce my friend to you on the rug yonder. Are you afraid of dogs?"

"Dogs? I am passionately fond of them. Ah! yes, what a splendid creature. Come here, sir." The dog did not move.

"You must excuse him, he has been so long out of ladies' society, that like his master he has forgotten how to behave himself. But he has the best intentions. Thor, come here, and be introduced to my friend." The dog, a huge, shaggy Newfoundland, rose slowly and came over where the two stood. "This is Miss Seaton, Thor, a very new but a very good friend of mine. Mind now, you are to behave yourself as well as you can." The brute stood still with his head pointing straight before him. The lady patted the great, black head with two round, white hands. "What splendid eyes he has. Let us be friends, Sir Thor." The dog of course said nothing. "But what a singular name, Mr. Vaughn."

"Yes, very. We are all a shade singular at the house, and we like it. Who cares to be like everybody else? Thor, you must know, is named after a Scandinavian divinity, of whom I have a real stone statue at my house, from Norway; a rough-bearded, hairy demon, who made thunder and lightning in his time, and was a trifle too earthly in his tastes to suit such refined people as we are now-a-days. So I have called this dog after him,

because the brute has good points in him, and is a hearty good fellow, according to his dog nature."

"You like dogs, then?"

"Oh, yes, I like all creatures, but horses and dogs most. I like them because I pity them as brutes put under such creatures as, I will say, we men are. Fate has kicked them into life at a disadvantage. There is not one of them that ever told a lie, and not one of them that can plead his own cause if any human brute should strike him across the mouth, in joke or anger. This dog is a friend I am sure of. He follows me all day as my shadow, and at night eats his bone without snarling or looking sour. He never tells on me, nor laughs at me behind my back, and would jump at the throat of any man who should make at me with a cudgel. He keeps guard on the rug at my chamber door every night, and, in short, does his duty as a dog should, which is more than can be said of his master. He is my friend, and I can rely on him. I therefore think very much of him. I am only sorry that dogs die so soon; and I wish they had souls. You two must be friends."

"If you two are well behaved and make yourselves agreeable, that will not be difficult. But come, I must attend to my guests. You, the master, be seated, and you, the dog, be pleased to make yourself comfortable anywhere about the house."

So the master and Miss Seaton sat down together, and the dog, retiring to his rug again, with his great head on his fore paws, watched, with two great, round, sleepy eyes, the pair.

"I beg to inquire for Madame Seaton and Miss Blanche, as I ought at first."

"Mother is out, and Miss Blanche has gone back to town."

"Gone back to town! I had hoped to see her again."

"Yes, she went at noon. Business, she said. She was not in a very amiable mood at the breakfast table this morning. I hope you made yourself agreeable to her last night, for she has had a great many admirers and yet has never married. You never met her before, I suppose?"

"Two questions need two answers, my lady. In the first place, I have hard work to be agreeable except when the fit is on me, and I was not at my best last night, but I did as well as I could with your cousin, and I shall be too vain to think that my society gave her the blues. In the second place, I did know your cousin once, slightly, but that was long ago, and she has very much changed since."

"Yes. She is wonderfully preserved, though, and quite a terror to all soft or sentimental people. Gentlemen are usually afraid of her, young gentlemen especially, and women such as I she

doesn't mind much. For a woman who dresses so well, she talks and thinks less of dress than any one I ever saw. Indeed, I don't know what she does think about. Certainly not about women's matters. She treats me as a child who don't know the world, and has a very sarcastic way of looking through one, and is occasionally very bitter. There, that is a mean way of talking about another woman; and if she heard me she would be sure to pay me for it. But Blanche is so peculiar, and I never could make her out. But she is very clever."

"You put in that last clause for a caveat against my opinion, and lest I should think that women never speak well of women. But now you have told me what Miss De Forest can do, perhaps you can tell me what you can do."

"Is it to-day that the disagreeable mood is on you?"

"I humbly trust not; but I am of an inquiring mind, and I always wish a lady to describe herself, in order not to put me to the trouble to find her out."

"Do you believe her when she gives you her description?"

"Certainly (with a curious drawing down of the mouth); I believe a lady always. She is quite my gospel. Now then, what can you do, Miss Seaton?"

“I can keep my secret.”

“What else?”

“I can eat my dinner, when it is well cooked.”

“What else?”

“Question for question. What earthly, imaginable good will it do you to know what I can do? Suppose I can build a house,—have you any houses to build?”

“I might order a dozen.”

“You may be sure then I should look to the pay before I began, and gentlemen are not always good paymasters.”

“I am, as you may know, a student, going about studying human nature. As I told you just now, I prefer that a lady should describe herself. Please, then, tell me what you can do.”

“Well, then, to please myself and to displease you, for I see there is nothing that suits you better than to confuse one, and, that this may end, I can do several things,—sew, sing, dance a little, paint autumn leaves in water colors.”

“Can you make bread?”

“Certainly not. Why should I?”

“Because no woman who cannot make bread is fit to be married?”

“And you, like every other man, think that the chief end of woman is to be married?”

“Certainly.”

“The conceit of men is monstrous. The chief

end of woman is to amuse herself, to dress, to dance, to walk, to ride a little, to be waited on, and, above all, not to be teased."

"So you cannot make bread, then," said Edward Vaughn, with a meditative air and in a provokingly serious voice.

"I tell you what, I can eat it, and the cooks can do the rest. As long as I get my bread, I have not and shall never have the slightest wish to know anything about the making of it."

"Clearly not made for a wife."

"Thank you. Come here, Thor," calling to the dog upon the rug; "come here a moment, good fellow." The dog slowly rose and came this time and laid his great head down in Isabel Seaton's lap. She bent down a vexed face over the brute, and caressed the head. "Come, good fellow, be my friend. Your master yonder is not a good man; he is vexing me. He is laughing at me ever since he came. Bark at him, bite him a little, anything to make him stop. Be my knight, good dog, and take my part." The dog's head laid quite still under two very white, round hands.

"Gallant dog," said the master, "take the lady's part. Your master is a great sinner, but he means well. But he is awkward. He pays a visit to a lady that he wishes to make his friend, and before he knows it provokes her almost to tears. He must be either a great villain or a

great unfortunate. Good dog, ask your mistress to have pity. We are only dogs; women are angels, and angels pity. Promise her we will behave in future, as we learn how, and beg her to teach us better manners. Beg her to shake hands and be friends" — and he held out his hand towards the dog's head. "Come now," he said, "Miss Seaton, forgive me and shake hands. I was rude." Very slowly a soft hand was laid in his.

"We are friends now? with these two hands on Thor's head."

"If you wish it I will be."

The hand was removed as slowly as it was given, and the great brute, looking first from one to the other, with a dog's gravity went finally back to the rug.

The half hour that followed such a reconciliation passed very pleasantly. Edward Vaughn could be an elegant gentleman; and when, in a low, musical voice, he chatted with her of Europe and the fashions of different people he had lived amongst, Isabel Seaton wondered how the man talking beside her could ever be absurd. Over an Italian song which they sang together they seemed to become still better friends, and when he rose to go Edward Vaughn wondered that he had stayed so long. She went with him to the open door. The sun was low in the west, and its rays were falling on the fresh spring leaves, wet with a

recent shower. There was that peculiar earthy smell in the air, which is, as it were, the scent of that life which garlands the breasts of Mother Earth with spring flowers and grasses.

"Come now, Miss Seaton," Edward Vaughn said, "if you have quite forgiven me, just take the short walk with me to the gate. You will need a shawl, I think, as it is a little chill. Allow me to assist your toilette," and he helped to put a stout, gray shawl round the shoulders in a very gentle fashion. "There now, you are quite waterproof." By the gate where they stopped there was an apple tree in full bloom. He reached up his hand and shook down the rain from the nearest branches. "Look at this apple tree," he said, "with its white blossoms flecked with crimson. It is the Madonna's tree. Oblige me by just standing under here a moment. Do not be afraid."

"I am not afraid," she said. She stood quite still, while the man beside her, reaching up a strong arm, shook down the blossom leaves upon the blonde hair.

"There now, *mon ami*; you see I crown you with flowers for a benediction. They are the best I have, though they are withered. Good bye." And Isabel Seaton walked slowly back to the house.

She was half convinced she hated him. What did that matter? With women love and hate are

two doors on one front, that may open into the same hall. Hate is the door on the left hand. Yet she said to herself, as she sat down at the piano where they two had been, "They say he is very rich."

And Edward Vaughn? —

He will try to take care of himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHADOW OF NEMESIS.

“MR. VAUGHN’S compliments to Miss Seaton and will call for her at three,” said a servant, as he handed in at the door a note for the aforesaid lady from his master. Miss Isabel read the note carefully in her mother’s dressing-room, and then merely said, “Ma, I am going to ride with Mr. Vaughn up the river road this afternoon, and shall probably be home late to tea.”

“See that you are warmly dressed, my child, and ask Mr. Vaughn from me to take his tea with us.”

“Yes, Ma;” and the daughter went down stairs to order her horse; and made ready.

Sharp three, Edward Vaughn rode up with his inevitable comrade Thor at his horse’s heels. He came in with his gray riding-suit, spurred and booted, and Miss Isabel met him in the hall. “So you are ready, are you?” he said, eyeing with evident satisfaction the lady who, whip in hand, and holding the trail of her riding habit, stood to receive him.

“Yes. I knew you would dislike to wait, and so I ordered my horse ready an hour ago.”

"Thank you."

"Ma says you are to take your tea with us."

"Very good ; now for the horse."

The horses were brought round, and the two rode away.

If ever Isabel Seaton looked well, it was on horseback and at a gallop. A perfect form ripened into young womanhood, and the glow of health upon her face, under the little, plumed hat that made no attempt to conceal the blonde hair beneath, and a certain courage in her horsemanship, were enough to warrant the look of admiration which her companion gave her as they passed through the gate into the road.

"Are you afraid to ride fast, *mon ami* ?"

"Try me."

"Well, then, for a dash ;" and the horses broke into a full gallop. There was a mile of it, and nothing said.

"We will not drive straight up this long hill, at any rate," Edward Vaughn said, as they came to the first hill that overlooked the river. "I am not sure, Miss Seaton, but your horse is the faster, and I must say you ride gallantly. Now, that is a compliment you have forced from me. I mean it."

"Do you not mean all compliments ?"

"No ; why should I ?"

"Why shouldn't you ?"

"Because compliments, as the world goes, mean

nothing. None know that better than women. They are a sort of sixpences and pennies with which one pays his way in society, and it makes nobody poorer giving them."

"But with your view of them they make nobody rich who gets them."

"It might depend on who gave it; but a sixpence might make one feel rich sometimes."

"I don't think I have found you very much of a prodigal with this sort of silver. At any rate, you wouldn't give a lady what was worth nothing, — mere leaves, or dry sticks from the roadside, would you?"

"Certainly I would, if it pleased her. Compliments are painted sticks with which clever people play at jackstraws, and whoever gets most gets not much. But come now, you should not always contradict me; should you, Miss Belle?"

"To use your word, 'certainly,' if I wish it. I like to contradict you men, — lords of creation, as you think yourselves. If you were let go on without reining you up sharp, you would be like runaway horses, forever getting into mischief."

"Well said, Miss Belle. And now, if you please, turn your horse's head, and let us take a look down the river."

It was a June day, when the woods upon the low, ragged hills which hemmed in the river had that fresh, living look which they never show so

well at any other season ; the light tasselled birches against the darker oaks, and the white flowers of the dogwood scattered along the hillsides ; while the clouds, mellow, gray, and rifted, had an abundant watery look as if about to give their fulness to the lips of the green woods to drink deeper verdure.

“ There,” he said, “ see the blue mist among the further hills, and the gray, restless river, whirling and eddying and eating into the sandbanks below us at the bends, and building sand-bars against those islands yonder — it seems never better satisfied than we mortals are. I am told that this river, since the white man came, has changed its bed at least a quarter of a mile away.”

“ How charming it is, and everything so fresh and sweet-scented,” the lady said ; “ the earth to-day looks quite like a bride. I hope it is a happy bride.”

“ A true bride anyhow, Miss Belle. There is not a leaf or a flower that ever lies. Human mouths only frame themselves to falsehood. Nature never grumbles, never backbites, but has a sweet, endless charity for all. I feel better in the spring fields than anywhere else ; because I know that they will say nothing disagreeable or accuse me of my faults.”

“ The spring affects even a strong man like you, then ? ”

"Yes; at least it did when I was younger. Then, somehow, when the buds were breaking into blossom, it used to seem to me as if I, unless I wished to be mocked by all the beauty around me, ought to rise up to the level of a great action and do something heroic and like a man. But since I have been older I have lost that sense in measure."

"Are you very, very old, sir?"

"If my years are to be counted by my sins, I am several centuries."

"What a patriarch! Are you a great sinner, too?"

"Yes, a vast sinner."

"Perhaps I might manage to get you absolution, if you paid well," she answered, patting quite mechanically her horse's neck.

"No priest can absolve me," he said; "I am past that. Besides, to confess to a man would be like eating wormwood; I should make wry faces at it."

"Suppose you elect me your father confessor," she said archly, glancing up into the face of the man beside her, with the blue eyes under the long eyelashes. "If you were humble enough, I might give you an easy penance."

"You! You are too young—allow me, too pretty—to confess to. The woman I confess to must be a hag, old, wrinkled, sere, toothless, and

wear a wig ; quite a wreck, you see ; a woman with a heart as tough as shoe leather and as dry too, no juices in her. Then if I brought my wares to her, she couldn't blush, and she wouldn't pity."

"Don't you like pity?"

"No, what man ever did? I had rather be struck in the face than pitied any time. To pity a man is to patronize him, and men like me are patronized — well, say by Beelzebub. At least we deserve it of our master."

"I shall begin to look for the horns and the hoofs pretty soon, if you insist on talking that way. You certainly look human, and have acted a little so since I have met you. You are cross and tease folks sometimes. But really, are you such a terrible individual as you would have me believe?"

"Yes, Miss Belle, I am everything — nothing ; an animal that eats his dinner but never earns it. I have a room under lock and key where I should be very sorry to have you go."

"Ah!"

"Not a very large chamber, with red hangings to it and some very curious machinery that will stop one day, and in it skeletons — neither clean nor handsome. You should never go in there for health or wealth."

"I have the curiosity of Blue Beard's wife. Pray, where is this chamber?"

"Here," he said, with a very grim smile, bringing down a great hand heavily on the gray coat, under which his heart was supposed to be.

"Ah, yes, I understand; you mean your heart. I have always been crazy to see one. What does it look like, I mean yours, Sir Blue Beard?"

"Well, never mind what it looks like. Now I have told you, take care. In Blue Beard's chamber there were some things that women didn't like to see. Remember, I gave you warning. Never ask for the key."

"I shall take care. You are no doubt a magnificent monster, and therefore will spare poor me for to-day. I came out for a gallop, and that, Sir Monster, I shall trust you will aid me to. You said we were to ride to the Bridge; we have four miles yet."

"Right; and away. You are a brave girl and your society goes hard upon making me like other masculine mortals — a trifle soft and blarneysome. Come."

And the two wheeled their horses into the road for a gallop. It was a swift ride to the Bridge, and as they reined up their horses under the gray granite cliffs, tufted with pines and cedars, to watch the passionate river that here dashed itself in foam against the seamed, weather-stained rocks which hemmed it in, Edward Vaughn cried "Bravo! That was well done for a woman. I

should like to ride with you at a fox hunt, Miss Belle. You were made to take a fence or a ditch without flinching. You have courage. I wish you were my sister."

"Then would you be more agreeable?"

"Possibly. Occasionally. I don't know. I don't know anything sure."

"That is a sad state of mind for a gentleman, I am sure. I thought they knew everything."

"Did you? Well, then, I don't *know*, but I think it is going to rain. The clouds are growing black in the north and rising; and the white crests on them look like a thunderstorm. I should regret exceedingly to have you spoil your hat."

"I am quite in your protection. Do you say 'home'?"

"Yes, home, I think. There, I hear the first rumble of the thunder."

It was time to be going. The cloud was rising, and the wind came in gusts, also a few drops of rain.

It was a fine dash they made, among the green woods, with the black cloud rising overhead until the face of the river that flowed beside them was also very black. It was at full speed that they rode under a clump of elms and maples, just where the hills had pushed themselves down on the left close to the river, and the road lay between. It was almost dark there.

"Give your horse the rein. He will keep the road, Miss Belle."

"I am doing so."

The words were scarcely spoken when her horse, first violently shying against his neighbor, reared almost upright. It was a moment's work in the dark under the trees. The horse, in a panic, and evidently bent on throwing his rider, plunged viciously. He had already sidled away towards the river. Edward Vaughn drove his spur deep into his horse's right flank, and with his right hand wheeled him with a lunge almost against the other, who was just rearing again. The woman had spoken no word, but was fighting for her life. He caught her horse, left handed, by the bridle, swinging himself clear off his own. The horse's head swung down a moment with the weight, and his right hand reached her in the saddle.

"Foot out of stirrup, jump;" and the silent woman, steadied by a strong arm, swung herself to the ground.

Edward Vaughn held to the horse. It was a powerful creature, thin flanked, heavy chested, and quite wild; and as the man clung to him the two struggled together to the road side and Vaughn was swung violently against a tree. He heard the bone crack. He had one arm left. With an oath hissing between his teeth, he aimed a frightfully crushing blow with the right at the horse,

behind the ear, and the brute fell quivering and stunned on the ground.

The woman came up to him. "Are you much hurt?" she said. She had not spoken before.

"No; stand away; your horse may make a lunge when he gets over the blow I hit him. Go back in the road."

Edward Vaughn held firmly the bridle of the prostrate horse. "Now, my good fellow," he said, when the creature finally rose to his haunches, "easy, I am here. Be quiet," and the horse came to his feet trembling from head to foot. The man had conquered.

"Come now to your mistress." As the man led the horse back into the road, he stumbled against something that felt like a pack of wool, and the horse, bending his nose to the ground, trembled and attempted a faint shy again. Edward Vaughn kicked the thing with his foot. "What's that?"

"Me," said a thin, squeaking voice. "Me."

"Me! Who the devil are you?"

"Me — Gum Arabic; the man what does chores at Widow Smith's. I am overtook with the cramp in my stomach."

"Drunk as a beast. You nearly broke my neck over your carcass. Get up," — and he gave him a kick with his boot.

"Help a feller up."

"Get up yourself or I'll throw you into the river."

The man, under the inspiration of the boot, managed to get up.

"Now stand here, until I get ready to have you go, or I'll cut your throat or do something worse."

He led the horse up to Miss Seaton. "He is as gentle as a lamb now. Will you dare to ride him home?"

"Yes; but where is your horse?"

"Gone down the road, nobody knows where, and I must foot it home. But come, the rain is almost here, and you must go. Here, let me help you. Have you got the reins in the dark, left hand, mind?"

"Now then," and with a strong arm around her waist she was swung to the saddle again.

"But what is to become of you?" she said.

"Oh, never mind me. I shall walk. Don't alarm the house, nor send anybody back for me. I shall be with you in a quarter of an hour or so. Ride on; it is raining now."

"If you will it, I will leave you."

"Ride hard, and don't stop to talk with me. It is going to be a very ugly night." And Isabel Seaton rode bravely away into the dark.

"Now then," he said, turning to the man with the pack, "what are you doing here?"

"I'm an unfortunate individual. My mother

was burnt to death and my sister died with the measles, and I've never been well since I had the influenza that's hurt all my bones."

"Yes, drunk and lay down in the road to sleep, for people to break their necks over; that's the story. Such fellows as you ought to be hung."

The man was slowly coming to his senses. He attempted to touch his bit of a slouched felt hat to Mr. Vaughn.

"Yes; I am an unfortunate, Mr. Vaughn," beginning a maudlin, half-drunken cry, "and you gin me three shillin' last week to help a feller. I didn't mean it; no, sure."

"Well, but I can't stop to bother with you. You'll die here in the rain before morning. Where are you going?"

"Nowhere."

"Go home."

"I hain't got none, nor no money nuther."

"Money! what a poor devil you are. You're always drunk when you have a sixpence. There, take that," giving him a couple of shillings, "and move on. Somebody will take you in, or you can get into a barn. But if you lie down in the road again to-night, I'll have you hung and cut up into quarters. Mind that."

"Yis, your honor;" and the man, lifting unsteadily his pack upon his stick over his shoulder, moved on. Edward Vaughn went down the road in a

fierce, steady tramp till he came to the Seatons' house. The rain was by this time falling heavily. Miss Seaton was waiting for him upon the piazza. "We have been so anxious," she said.

"I had better go to the kitchen," he said; "I am wet and muddy."

"No; into the dining-room by the fire."

"But what is the matter?" she said, as he came to the light. "You are so pale." He was indeed white.

"Nothing of consequence. I wish somebody to go for the doctor. I have got a job for him," and a grim smile crossed his features again.

"Do not alarm yourself, madam," he said to Mrs. Seaton, as that lady with a very bustling air was proposing a remedy for at least a score of maladies. "It is a trifle. I am a little faint, and I want a glass of brandy, if you have it." The doctor came in with an inquiring professional look. "I have broken my left arm, Doctor, and want it set. No; don't move it. I heard the bone break. Cut off the coat and get at it somehow." They cut the coat off, and set the bone of a great, brawny arm. "There now" he said, when it was finished, "I have been over the world, and never did this thing before; and now for a horse to break my arm in a cowpath! Bah! Miss Seaton, this will never do. It is not romantic."

Then he rose up. "I regret to say, ladies," with

a very formal bow to Madame, "that I cannot take my tea with you this evening. I must go home."

"Home! Impossible. It is a hard rain-storm."

"Your pardon, I must go home."

"At least we will send you home."

"No, I shall walk."

The company looked at one another, as though the man before them was a little daft.

"Adieu, ladies," he said, and went tramping out into the storm. Edward Vaughn should have been a great and good man, and he knew himself to be neither. To be wet with rain, to be beat with storm, to fight his way through obstacles to his point, to be forever satisfying his fierce, lawless moods, in a fierce battle somewhere, to absorb himself in a struggle for mastery over something, and then to throw away his prizes as though they were dead leaves, this was the secret of his life.

Therefore with a broken arm he chose to tramp home in the rain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MAIDEN.

EDWARD VAUGHN seemed to have entered the world again at his party. By that fête he had become at once acquainted with Aubrey folk and a visitor at several houses. The town people, now that the ice was broken, found him an agreeable person, and if his faults had been as mountains, there are some in every community to whom they would have been quite hid behind his bank-book. Truth to say, he was a pleasant person when the fit was on him, and he never did things by halves. He evidently intended to make himself agreeable, and agreeable he was. But while he cultivated Aubrey society, he also betook himself with new zeal to field sports; and although his broken arm hindered him for some time from horseback, he went, to say truth, trout fishing every other day. With nothing to do he was the busiest of men, and with a certain restless activity he was always walking, climbing, or exploring through almost every field and glen in the neighborhood.

He was trout fishing one Saturday morning in

Curtis' brook, with his invariable companion, Thor, who had learnt the mysteries of the craft, well in his rear to avoid scaring the fish, and hunting frogs at his own venture in the pools that had been left in the hollows under the tree roots which exposed themselves at the bank edges. It was a wild place, where the stream in spring freshets swept on full between the high rocky banks thick with pines and hemlocks; but at this season the water had shrunk away to a shallow stream tumbling noisily over the rocks midway between the banks, and its bed was for the most time bare. Mr. Vaughn was fishing up stream among the rocks and in the pools that lay at their base, absorbed in his sport, until he had come to where the high banks afore named close together and overhang the water with the deep shadows of their evergreens. It was the place where the largest trout lie hid. All at once he had a sense that some one was near him, though he had not looked up, and the stream was so noisy that he heard nothing else. Yet he *felt* a presence, and knew that when he chose to look he should find a human creature near him. So he looked up, of course. Ten feet before him, under the hemlocks, was a woman. He took a good view of her. It was a girl of twenty, maybe, who wore a chip hat trimmed black and a gray dress with a brown cloth sack over it. She was of medium height, petite, brown haired, with a pale face and

two very round black eyes, soft liquid Oriental eyes, such as Peris have, they say, who salute those good Mahomedans that are so fortunate as to enter Paradise. Besides the eyes, and that hers was a pure, open, childlike face, there was nothing to be especially remarked about her. She had a collection of ferns and brakes in her hand, and on her left arm a wicker basket with a lid to it.

First Edward Vaughn made her as polite a bow as he well could standing upon two very slippery stones. Then he said, with a smile, "I very seldom have a lady's company trout fishing, and I didn't think there was one of your race within a thousand miles of me; for it seems a thousand miles away from everybody when I get in under these hills."

"I am quite as much surprised as you can be at this meeting, I assure you, sir. I seldom meet any one here but the birds and squirrels, and I come here very often."

"I beg your pardon, then, for intruding on your solitude. As you seem to be the Lady of the Woods, I beg you to allow me to catch a few more trout before I go home to dinner."

"These are not my woods," she answered, "but God's, and they belong to everybody. I can give you no permission here. Aubrey people own the town, but the woods and the waters belong to Him, and therefore are free to every one."

“May I make bold to ask the name of the lady I see before me with a handful of ferns.”

“I am Lucy Farewell, the teacher of St. Clement’s parish school.”

“Ah, yes, you belong to the Stone Church. I am Edward Vaughn—without occupation, less than sixty, a vagabond trout fisher, horse rider, dinner eater, Epicurean, Stoic, something, nothing,—at your service.”

The lady looked surprise out of the black eyes, but, saying nothing, was picking up her basket, which she had laid off her arm, as if to go.

“Pardon me, Miss Farewell, a question. I am a little curious to know why you go clambering round among these hills. It’s not the way of young ladies generally to do anything else but dress and eat their dinners; besides, the sun is very like to spoil your complexion.”

“Do you really wish to know, sir?”

“I do.”

“Then I am willing to tell you. I have gone out into the fields and woods ever since I was a child. I was born with a love of it. Everything in the fields is so pure and gentle. In the house I feel in prison, but when I come to a place like this under the trees, and with those clear pools to look into, or out in the sunshine looking up at the blue sky or the white clouds, I feel freer, and as though God was nearer me; and I can think, too, of my dear

mother, who always seems nearer to me in such a place than anywhere else, except in our parish church, perhaps, and of many things which a young person like me ought to think of."

She said this, not looking at him but beyond him down the stream, and as it were speaking to herself; and she said it too with a perfectly impassive face and without the least embarrassment or consciousness of self; quite as a child talks. Edward Vaughn had never heard that kind of talk from a woman in all his life. It was certainly not the talk that one hears in the waltz or at a dinner party. He had heard women discourse on fashion, art, love, even religion, but quite in an elegant way; but anything so fresh, so simple, so childlike in a woman he had actually never met. Her words were not those of a rustic, and her way was not exactly like that of a lady according to the world. He actually experienced a new sensation. It was as though he had caught into his society a new species of the genus female. He might neither know nor care what it was like; but a rare bird like this it was well worth his while to make sing a little. Therefore he opened wide his eyes for a good look at her. It was only a girl in a gray dress. There was a queer, puzzling, half-satiric expression in his face. "So, then, you believe in God?"

Her face flushed red at once. This time she looked straight at him.

"Believe in God? Believe in God?" she said. "Why do you speak so? Do you disbelieve in Him?" and her nature seemed shrinking back and away from him into itself, as if to hide from something that sadly hurt it. "I shall not answer that question, sir."

"I meant no offence. People are apt to use phrases carelessly, and I merely wished to learn whether you realized what you were saying. I certainly believe in God, if not in your way, at least in my own, and if I didn't I would try and lay a train of gunpowder to blow up the world and rid it of some of the insects that crawl over it."

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir," she replied. "I could not respect any one who spoke differently. I do not mean you, but such a person would seem a monster without heart or head. Let me show you something. Please look down stream," and she pointed with her hand. "Look through these trees with the sunshine on them, down over those birches and maples, and that very blue sky beyond. In one sense their beauty would be the same if there were no God, but the sense of God fills them with poetry and tenderness, and a spiritual beauty, if I may call it so, which is worth all the rest."

Edward Vaughn was not in the mood to hear sermons; and there was something a trifle absurd to have a girl for preacher, and pious things were

not exactly in his line, and here he was under instruction. It was a new rôle that puzzled him. So he went back to the old, half-veiled sarcasm.

"Since, then, I have won your respect by my correct answer, will you be so kind as to tell me what sort of wonders you have caged up in that basket on your arm. Are you a botanist?"

"I did not say you had won my respect. You are a stranger to me, and I do not know you. I trust you are worthy of a woman's respect. I have no objection to show you my basket."

Edward Vaughn was actually puzzled. This woman had somehow a masterful way about her, that with its simple truthfulness was breaking down the fence of his clever words and reaching the very heart of the matter, conquered in the dispute. Yet of the world, so called, he knew ages more than she who had never been outside a country village. With a woman like Isabel Seaton he could hold his own through all the intricacies of subtle sayings, but with this child almost he was breaking down. That touched his pride first. "It is a country girl, romantic. Bah!" he thought. Next he felt somehow, deep down in his soul, that here was a pure, simple, innocent, woman's nature, and truth to say he revered it, as men always reverence — *women*. Then upon the spot he actually became sincere in his own heart, which went back in secret sympathy and

homage towards her innocence, and when he spoke again he had laid aside a certain frivolity which was used to tone all his speech.

“Please show me your basket.”

So she put down her basket and the ferns in her hand and took out the contents. “These are mosses off the stones and tree-trunks,” she said, as she took out and laid on the ground exquisite pieces of moss. “I have gathered these for my fernery. See, they are softer than velvet, and under the trees where they grow is a carpet such as not even queens have.”

“Yes, they are very beautiful, and each has a shading of its own besides, such as no painter could put on with his brush. Yes, Miss Farewell, I do believe in God. Only sometimes, when I see how the world goes, and men and women act, it seems as though He were gone to sleep.

“God is good enough, as these mosses show, and men like me have sometimes religious thoughts; but then, when we go out into the world again we go down to its level and live practical atheists. But you don’t know the world, and I hope you never may. There’s not much romance nor religion to it, nor anything else than money. I have got money, Miss, plenty of it, more than is good, maybe, but I’d give a round half of it if I could have a child’s faith again and believe in God as you seem to.”

"I don't know the world," she said, "and if it makes one wicked I don't wish to know it, but I know that God is everywhere, our Father, and the more I believe in Him the more happy and content I am."

"I would do nothing to disturb your faith." So then Edward Vaughn helped her put back her mosses into the basket and gather up her ferns from the stone where she had laid them. "You had better not try to follow the stream down, for below, the last freshet has jammed its bed full of floatwood and a tree has fallen across it. There's a pair of bars just this side, where you had better go on to the upland."

"I know the bars very well, thank you, and every rod of ground about here. The woods are my garden. Good day."

And Edward Vaughn did not presume to follow her, but watched until she had passed the bars. The interview had affected him strangely. Lucy Farewell's presence lent something to his life which was as a pure, cool, evening breeze from the hills on the heated and worn reaper in the sultry day. There are those who, when we meet them, tone us up to a purer life, and Lucy Farewell was one of them, for her soul was pure and childlike. Edward Vaughn had confessed his inferiority to her.

He went on fishing up stream.

CHAPTER XIX.

“THE REVIVAL.”

THE revival was in full blast at the meeting-house. Under a great heat, many germs of things had sprouted up in the hearts which had been exposed to the fire of the passionate prayers and warnings spoken there. On some a great change had been wrought, and ever after, till their life's end, they walked with a graver and wiser step in the paths of this world, looking for a great, pure rest to come. On others, greatly moved for a season, it was as though a whirlwind broke, which, when it passed, left them stunned and dulled henceforth towards things spiritual. It was a storm that fed some flowers but broke others upon the stalk.

Mr. Lefingwell consented to, rather than counselled, the performance. But Deacon Hobbs and those who thought with him were in their element. It is so very comfortable for the man beside the fire to counsel the vagrant in the snow to be warmed and fed in a charity that costs him only words. The Deacon began, where charity does, at home, and in his family of late he had been very urgent with his daughter, Prudence

Hobbs. The mother of Prudence Hobbs was long since in her grave, but she had been a true, gentle woman, for the Deacon had wed with women of a far nobler strain than his, in that mysterious Providence at work everywhere around us, which often allots to very mean men noble wives, as though the costliest diamonds were to be worn upon the ugliest hands. Prudence had inherited her mother's nature. She had grown up from a frail, silent, meditative child to a sensitive and now quite handsome woman. But her girlhood had been shadowed by her austere home. From that home everything beautiful had been banished except the sunshine which crept in at the windows, or the honeysuckle that trailed itself around the two posts of the front door. The religion indoors was iron, and iron is cold, and frays or chills. It was not the Puritan religion, for that had always a fierce flame to it, that no wise man ever spoke lightly of, but the mere skeleton of an ancient faith, with the inside burnt out. In such an atmosphere Prudence Hobbs had grown to womanhood, but, while she outwardly obeyed its rule, her young mind rebelled against its barriers, and, lifting itself up to find something to feed its hunger, had dreamed far away into the enchanted land which the holy angels guard for such as she, and craved religion. This was the soul that "the revival" fell down upon in Deacon

Hobbs' house. To say that he understood his daughter would be to say that the clod comprehends the flower that springs from it. But because he did not understand his daughter he smote her sorely by all he did. Humble before her own faults, with a humility he could never know, she needed gentle hands to lead her whither her own heart prayed to go, but did not know the way, and he gave her bitter Hebrew roots for diet, but not the Gospel. It was not so much that she feared to suffer God's wrath as prayed to be made His child. Her father's will had forced her to the revival, and she had sat through all, pale, silent, and outwardly unmoved. But the revival smote upon a soul already sore, while at home the Deacon urged the fire. It was as though to give a hungry man a furnace.

It was the last night of the revival, and the Deacon called for his daughter. She was not in the house. Perhaps she had gone before to the meeting. Yet she was not there, and the Deacon turned uneasily in his seat several times during meeting to search for her among the people. After service, he inquired of several. No one had seen her. It was certainly very strange, for she had been always in her place at these devotions; and the Deacon, with an unquiet air, walked rapidly home. She was not there either. Nine, ten o'clock, and she did not come. She had sel-

dom been out late at night, and never alone. It was time to arouse the neighbors. The neighbors searched late through the town, and when, as the first faint bars of light appeared in the east, the tired men went home, they had found nothing. Prudence Hobbs had disappeared.

But where had she gone? All that day in her chamber she had heard in her heart: “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” and no angel had spoken any other word. Then the great awful thought of judgment to come rose up before her — a cloud of darkness that overawed and enwrapped her soul with blackness. Even hope seemed to die; and to her sensitive nature she was sinking to the pit, with none to help. Her brain throbbed; her face was hot and feverish; she could not weep; only occasionally she moaned. The day had grown towards the evening. Then with a forlorn and desperate heart she rose up, and putting on her hat and shawl went out, she knew not and cared not whither. She met none as she crossed the common; but she went down quite mechanically towards the river. The evening air cooled her brain a trifle, as she found herself by the graveyard, which stood on a bluff overlooking the flood below. She passed in through the open gate, straight on to her mother’s grave, and, throwing herself prostrate upon it, in the grass wet with the dew, lay there motionless, as if dead. Then she

prayed a strangely mixed human prayer; prayed to her dead mother, who bore her, to have mercy on her and beseech that God whom she could not dare approach — He was so terrible — to deliver her and make her His; and then again, in her desperation, she prayed deep down at her soul's centre even to Him for pardon. And thus she prayed, even till the stars, swung in their orbits by His hand, had risen high above her; and yet her soul had heard no answer.

O stars, serene and pure in the spring nights! O skies that overarch us, the matchless temple dome upon the everlasting hills! O earth, most motherly and gentle! — you have no lips to speak our pardon; but He who made you thus and suffered once for all — even for her — hath spoken by His cross and passion that He is merciful, that He will pardon!

Then she betook herself to the road again, and went, not knowing or caring whither. The sound of the river near her flowing over the stones sounded like a dirge. On — tired, feverish, consumed of the flame in her — she went to the Factory Village. The lights were out and the shops shut; there were no people in the empty streets, as though the very town was dead and gone to judgment. She passed on to the outskirts of the village. Down the lane, on her left, in a solitary house, there was a light burning. She knew it well — the House of Idols, the Roman Catholic

meeting-house, as the folks called it. It was the last place, she knew, that a child of the Puritans should ever enter. What they worshipped there she had never learned, only she had often heard it said that they were very wicked people, who had burnt pious folks under Queen Mary, as she had read in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs." Yet what did it matter to her, under God's wrath, and doomed? She turned down the lane until she came to the building. Then she sat down on its stone steps and hid her face in her shawl, until she was chilled through. Then she tried the door; it was locked. Then she went round in the wet grass by the north side. The windows were all shut. There was a door in a little room which projected from the building at the further end. She tried it; it opened, and she entered. It was a little room with a table in it, and a white dress or something lay on one of the chairs — a covering for idols, maybe. Then she passed into the church itself. At the end where she stood there was a dim lamp, swung by a chain from the ceiling, and to her left what looked like a great white catafalque, or tomb, as she thought, with great candles on it, and in the centre a huge cross. That was all she could see. What a strange place, and the idols were no doubt close at hand, perhaps in that white tomb before her. Yet she might as well go to the pit from here as anywhere.

She flung herself upon some steps under the lamp, facing that great white tomb. Sometimes, to her disturbed vision, it seemed bursting into flames, and she thought she heard groans. Then impish and devilish shadows seemed dancing round the cross and mocking it, while she waited for them to turn on her. So in her delirium she kept her vigil before the altar, until, exhausted, she fell asleep.

The Roman Catholic chapel was a building very like a barn, with a large red cross upon its front. Otherwise it was very like all such places. It was not an elegant edifice, but its worshippers were not ashamed of it. It was the best they could. Father Doherty was the priest in charge; and was very like a great many other priests. He had a broad, red, good-humored face and large, gray eyes with a slight squint to them. He was often called by some a fat, lazy monk, just as though it was a sin for a Christian to be fat and Christians might not be lazy. It was a part of that ascetic temper which razed its hat to Puritan plainness but forgot to cut its hair. The divines of Genevan origin, when studied in a portrait gallery, have an emaciated look, though in this the hermits of the Roman schools outdo them; and in their theology, as exemplified in mortals, leanness was akin to godliness. The Catholic Church has never held it a sin in a priest

to be fat. Father Doherty was therefore fat, and was not ashamed to be so.

When he came to his chapel, to make his devotions, the morning after Prudence Hobbs had disappeared, he unlocked the front door and went in. There was a more than slight flavor of old clothes about the building, and the seats were wooden, and at his college he had seen finer sanctuaries, but this was his cure and he was proud of it, for the altar-cloths were always kept white and dusted, and service was exactly rendered. Father Doherty had a large heart and a little learning, but he knew how to do his work, and did it, while he left his superiors to manage greater affairs than his, according to their wit.

He approached the altar. He stopped short, however, before he got there. First he crossed himself and began a Pater Noster. Then he broke into ejaculations. "Blessed Virgin! and all the saints! it is a woman!" Yes, a woman asleep under her shawl in Father Doherty's chapel! He crossed himself again, and then shook her by the shoulder. "Wake up, young woman. What are you doing here?"

Prudence Hobbs, for it was she, slowly roused herself as though she had slept deep down toward somewhere, opened her eyes half dreamily, and then sat up. The eyes red with weeping, and the worn face under the dishevelled hair, which she

made several useless attempts to brush back from her forehead, showed the father at once that here was some one in distress.

He said therefore gently, "My poor child, how came you here?"

"I hardly know myself."

"Whose daughter are you?"

"Deacon Hobbs'."

Father Doherty crossed himself again. Deacon Hobbs he knew as a man who thought that what was Roman Catholic was devilish, and what was anti-Roman Catholic was holiness; and for Deacon Hobbs' daughter to be found in his chapel quite perplexed the good man. He was also a little alarmed. But he repeated his question. "How came you here, my child?"

He waited some time for his answer. The blackness was returning to her heart with her waking. First she shuddered a cold, suffering shudder. Then she held both hands to her head, as though there was something heavy on her brain. Then finally she burst into tears and sobbed. The priest let her cry it out. When that was done, he said, very quietly, "Do not distress yourself so, my child. Maybe I can help you? Tell me what troubles you. Is it sin?"

She shuddered again. "Yes."

"Is it mortal sin? Can you tell me what it is? I am an old man" (Father Doherty was forty,

maybe). "Now tell me, quite like your father."

The shudder passed over her again, but she said nothing. The priest waited patiently. "Yes," she said at last, "I am a great sinner and there is no mercy for me. I am lost forever."

"But why? God is all mercy. The Virgin, a woman like you, and yet Mother of God, has mercy. All the saints have mercy. There is mercy for everybody. Be comforted, my child. You wrong yourself."

"No, I can't be religious. I have tried it all my days and I can't get religion. Father says I shall be lost. A great many have got religion at the revival, and I have been to all the meetings and yet I am worse than ever. I can't be good and feel as they say I should. And I know I shall never be saved;" and the old shudder came over her again. It was all plain now to the priest's mind. She was a victim to the revival which he heard was going on at the meeting-house in Old Town; and a sort of uncatholic anathema passed through his heart as he saw the young girl's misery; but he was too well trained to show it, and he merely said, "Have you a mother, my child?"

"My mother is dead."

"Do you remember her? Was she kind to you?"

"Yes; she was a dear mother. I wish I was with her" (sobbing again).

"Now then, think of your mother, all she was to you, holding you on her bosom as a baby. But God is more loving than she was, insomuch as He is greater than she was. He is all love; and here through his Church, and hereafter in His own person, He will hold you to His heart, as His child. It will be a great sin in you not to trust Him. Your mother trusted Him, I hope, and you must."

The young girl grew more quiet under his reassuring words. The priest was silent a few moments, as if in thought. Then he said, "Do you know anything about the Church, my child?"

"What Church?"

"The Church — our Church — my Church."

She looked up honestly into his face. "I know they say you are very wicked people and worship idols. But you are very kind to me. Is it true what they say?"

Father Doherty's face grew grave with an expression of sorrow on it. Then he said, "I would that you and all your race were children of the Catholic Church, and for that we pray without ceasing. But you are not of the mind that would ever make you one, I see. Yet you must serve God somehow, for He is full of love. Now then, you must go home."

She shuddered. "I cannot go there. I am unhappy."

"But, my child, you must. It is your place. Come, now, I will help you to rise," and he held out his hand for her.

She tried to rise, but almost fainted. It was an awkward dilemma for the good father. "Ah, I see," he said, "you are quite worn out. Be quiet a moment till I come back. He came back from the vestry with a cup. "Here, drink this. It is wine." And she obeyed.

"Now then, let us go." She rose up by his aid, and went down to the door, the priest steadying her. But she was very weak.

"You will never get home, my child, in this way. You can hardly walk straight. Lean on me." So, leaning on him, Father Doherty led her to the little parsonage just by. The old Irish house-keeper stared aghast at the sight as he led her in.

"Here, Bridget, give this poor child some breakfast; she is very weak." And Bridget, with the bustling, kindly air of her sex and nation, gave her in due time some breakfast. Then Bridget suggested a brush and comb and a little cold water, and after Prudence Hobbs had made her toilette that sad, pure face of hers, whether Protestant or Catholic, was not exactly homely.

When Prudence Hobbs had had due time to refresh herself, Father Doherty again made his appearance from his cell, or wherever such priests have their oratory in Protestant land, and inspected his guest.

"You feel better, my child, for your breakfast, I see. Now shall we go home?"

The old shudder passed over her again. "No; not home," she said with vehemence; "anywhere but there. I have been so wretched."

The good father was used to be obeyed. Besides, he had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and the additional knowledge that if he was caught proselytizing a Protestant in that place, and, moreover, one of Deacon Hobbs' strain, he might have his house pulled down about his ears. For these several reasons, therefore, he proposed to get the unfortunate girl off his hands as soon as possible. Yet he was gentle.

"Tell me, my child, if you won't go home, what I am to do with you here. Blessed Virgin! how can I have any woman in my house, except the cook? And suppose your father should find you here. He would have me, your friend, Father Doherty, hung for a witch."

Yet her distress increased. "Have mercy on me," she cried; "I am willing to go anywhere but into the misery from which I have fled. Tell me what to do."

Father Doherty held the forefinger of his right hand to his lip and mused. It was a distressing case of conscience. If he could have made her his he would, and he was now about to return her to a religion which she loathed, and in which, as

he thought, salvation might be more than difficult. And yet to meddle might be dangerous. He hit upon a compromise, that partly satisfied him. "I have it," he cried, starting up. "I won't carry you back to the folks that have tormented you, my child, but you shall go to Parson Ardenne. He won't bother you with their nonsense, and he may do you good. Are you willing?"

Prudence Hobbs assented, and the two left Bridget wondering in the kitchen, as she peered after them through the blinds, where on earth the father had found that Protestant. The same thought occurred to several people who met them as they passed through the Village, but the father kept on with his charge, walking before her, for spiritual safety, perhaps, until he was near the Common. There, as chance would have it, he saw Mr. Ardenne coming down the street.

"Now, my child, here comes Parson Ardenne, who will put you all right."

The rector, as he saw the two, also wondered. He merely said, "The town was alarmed last night for the safety of this young person. Where did you find her, Father?"

"In my chapel asleep, poor child. They have been teasing her with their revival, and she is quite melancholy like, poor thing. She is afraid to go home, and I was bringing her up to you just to comfort and pacify the lamb a little—

plague on all this nonsense. I'm of the opinion that this young woman has had too much preaching lately, and wants a little instruction just now. And you are the man to give her that."

Mr. Ardenne inquired into the case briefly. It was a plain one. The young girl before him was plainly in that excitement which might become very dangerous on any further provocation. It was necessary that she should be quieted, and, as she shrank from her home with an almost insane vehemence, it only remained to decide where she should go. The minister bethought himself. "Have you any objection to go to Miss Kendrick's, just by here? She is a kind woman, and when I tell her about you she will take good care of you." Prudence Hobbs, in a sort of hopeless resignation, rather than any very decided wish, assented.

"Good-bye, my child," said Father Doherty, "the Holy Virgin keep you," and he turned back again. He was a Roman priest, but he was also a human being; and under all garbs, and despite all mortal errors, one finds often a loving heart — the ineffaceable image of God.

Miss Mary was surprised by her two visitors just as she was overseeing her morning's housework. She had heard of Prudence Hobbs' disappearance. Mr. Ardenne explained the situation. "Above all, she needs quiet. You must get her to sleep somehow." Miss Mary took her charge in

hand. "Come," she said, "you are worn out and need sleep." So she took her into her own room. Then she took off her shawl and hat. Next she made her comfortable on her own sofa, with pillows. She closed the blinds, and made the room quite dark. Then she kissed the worn girl and said, "I will come back in a moment and sit by you till you go to sleep."

"Her head is very hot," she said to Mr. Ardenne in the hall. "There is danger of brain fever. Don't let the Deacon come here to-day on any account. If I am let alone, I think I can carry her through."

"I am going to find her father," he said, and went out.

Miss Mary went back to the dark room, and sitting down by the side of her patient, bathed gently her forehead in camphor, until she fell into a quiet sleep.

Mr. Ardenne found Deacon Hobbs and told him where his daughter was. He also explained to him, as politely as he could, her distress and the causes of it. The Deacon's amazement was not to be described, except in this way, that while it was noisy, it was somehow wooden and creaky; since his nature, as has been told, had no juices in it, and his very passions, such as he had, lacked a certain fire of earnestness which makes even mere human passion somehow decent. He interrupted the

minister's story several times with ejaculations of a pious horror, but the latter got through at last, saying, "I am mixed up in this matter quite accidentally, and only wish as a Christian man to be of any service I can to you and your daughter."

"You would be glad to make her one of yours, I suppose," the Deacon said.

"I have made no attempt that way, and I do not propose to do so, at least against your will. The whole matter rests with you, as her father."

"The Deacon started up to go to his daughter, to comfort her with a new volume of the Law, and especially that which teaches us to obey our parents. "My daughter was always stubborn and headstrong, and now she has run away from me. She must obey."

"If you go to her to-day you will peril her life. She is in a very critical state, and you might drive her to insanity by saying anything to her just now. When she is in a calmer mood you can do as you like. But as things are, it would be merely inhuman to molest her, and I think the town's folk would blame you severely."

The Deacon sat down again. He had an appetite for popularity, as men are prone to crave that most which they are doomed most to lack.

"When my daughter repents and wishes to see me, I will go to her."

Deacon Hobbs himself had never sinned!

CHAPTER XX.

THE OLD AND THE NEW IN STRIFE.

WHEN Prudence Hobbs woke next morning she was refreshed indeed, but the old pain came back to her heart again. Both the Deacon and Mr. Ardenne had been at the house to inquire for her, but no one, by the doctor's orders, had seen her. The two ladies had nursed her tenderly; and, when evening prayers had been said in her sick chamber, Miss Mary kneeling by the invalid's bed, in the silence that followed, before they rose from their knees, they both prayed for her "the peace that passeth understanding."

It was well that Prudence Hobbs had had her breakfast before the Deacon came—loud, rigid, solemn, insisting to see his daughter. Miss Mary could not very well deny him, so he came in. Neither his daughter's youth, nor her evident distress, softened his righteous indignation, but he began with the law of children obeying parents, and in a long discourse proved that his daughter had wronged and rebelled against him, Deacon Hobbs, had despised the covenanted mercies, and was without doubt a child of wrath, and would

descend to the pit. It might have been all true, but it was not exactly the way to save his daughter.

Furthermore, this morning his eloquence was all in vain. Her heart closed up under his words, as though they had been blows, and there only remained her old darkness and rigidity of nature. She did not even interrupt his discourse, and for some time after he stopped she made no reply.

“What have you to answer, young woman ; or have you nothing to answer ? ” he said.

“Father, I wish to be good and a Christian ; but I can’t be in the way you wish. The meetings have done me no good, and only make me feel worse and more rebellious. My heart is very hard, I know, and it grows harder every day, and I expect to be damned ; but if I am, I can’t help it. I have prayed to be better ; but I can’t feel as other people say they do, and I am very miserable.”

The Deacon insisted that she should go home. Then with a half-delirious energy, and as if an old wound very near her heart had been cruelly struck somehow, rising up before him she told him that come what might, whether lost or saved, as she was miserable and in despair, to that home she could not and would not go.

The Deacon stood aghast at her wickedness ; and Miss Mary, anxious for smaller matters than the Deacon handled, feared hysterics.

“Your child is very poorly,” she said, “and should be kept quiet, and all this injures her. I think if you will leave your daughter to recover from her distress, she will then be ready to do all she should. But really, as she is now, an interview like this is dangerous. I wish you would leave her to me.” The Deacon could in nowise understand the matter, but he obeyed Miss Mary so far as to follow her out of the room, where very energetically she expressed *her* opinion that here was a poor, distressed, excited child, whom everybody but herself should let alone; and that it would be murder in anybody to talk religion to her in her present state; and she insisted that everybody, except herself and the doctor, should let *her* patient be quiet. “She wants rest and a little common sense more than anything else in the world just now.”

As Miss Mary was not one of his wives, nor ever likely to be, the Deacon made no oration in answer to her emphasis, but put on his hat and went off. He was always suspicious of his neighbors: here, he thought, was a conspiracy to make his daughter an Episcopalian. Full of this ingenious discovery he made haste to the rectory, and with a very steady tramp of his cowhide boots upon the stairs, presented himself, with no great ceremony, to the rector preparing his Sunday’s sermon.

"When did you see my daughter, sir?"

"Yesterday morning."

"And haven't you seen her since?"

"No."

"I am not accustomed, Mr. Ardenne, to accuse people without proof, but it has occurred strongly to my mind, since our last meeting, that you were trying to make my daughter an Episcopalian in spite of my wishes."

Mr. Ardenne's face flushed a little.

"We are not used to do things in an underhand way, nor to teach children to disobey their parents. But we are ready to show people how to be Christians, and we would be glad, if not only your daughter, but all were Church folk. I have hardly more than seen her, and certainly shall not undertake to steal her away from your communion, though, as she has actually run away from it, I conclude she has no great taste for it."

"I don't wish to make you mad, parson, but I have always entertained a great prejudice against your persuasion."

"What is the matter with 'my persuasion,' as you call it?"

"It's as bad as the Roman Catholics, and I don't see much difference between you. I expect you will all be Papists one of these days."

"You have mixed two or three distinct matters together in what you have just said, and I will

now divide them, and answer you. In the first place, what do you mean by "as bad as Roman Catholics"? Do you mean that Roman Catholics have nothing good about them, and Protestants have all good? Do you mean that Roman Catholics hold no true doctrines, and Protestants hold them all? Do you mean to say that Roman Catholics have no piety, and all Protestants are holy? For a sensible or charitable Christian it would be a very delicate matter to say all that. It is the fashion of many folks to lump the Roman Catholic Church together, and call it all rottenness and bad. This is not a wise way to do, because abuse always creates sympathy for the abused, and throws fair-minded men to the wrong side sometimes. A dog, maliciously hunted, finds friends; and there is no use calling the Roman Church all evil, if it be partly good. That Church believes in the Holy Trinity, for instance, as Protestants do; but they believe in a great many other doctrines that we do not. We discriminate between their truth and error. And that is the reason why we, whom you think as bad as Roman Catholics, are the very last people to become such. The man who knows best his neighbor's landmarks is least likely to trespass on his neighbor's lands.

"Protestants often go to Rome in a reaction from their own injustice in thinking her all evil, and end by thinking her all good. But they err

both first and last. We shall none of us triumph by calling her heathen, but by surpassing her as Christian. Now we are not only not Romanizers, but in the long run we expect to be the bulwark of Protestantism against Rome by furnishing Christendom what is good in Rome minus the evil. We think we hold a faith older than Rome, and purer."

"But your rites and ceremonies are certainly Romish," said the Deacon. "All these crosses you make, and all this about Lent and Easter, sounds like 'the Scarlet Woman.'"

"As to Lent and Easter, and all other fasts and feasts, we keep them because Christ's Church commands us, just as she commands us to keep Sunday; and if you keep Sunday because it is Christian tradition, you should keep the other holy days for the same reason.

"Again, you cannot object to all rites and ceremonies, because you have your own, but only to *our* rites and ceremonies.

"You say some things we do, look Roman.

"Shall I do nothing that a Roman Catholic does? Then I must cease to breathe. He says the Apostle's creed. Shall I not say it? He sings the Te Deum. Shall I not sing it? The question for you and me is not what Rome holds, but what the Catholic Church holds."

"But what do you think of a religion that is

nothing but rites and ceremonies?" said the Deacon.

"If you mean to imply by that that the religion of our Church consists of rite and ceremony, I can only say that it is a very harsh judgment in a matter where neither you or any other man has a right to judge; and besides that, it is not correct. If in many rites and ceremonies there is much worship, well; if little, ill; and if with no rite and ceremony there be no worship, then still worse. Any rite which aids men to adore God is a good rite; and any rite which hinders men from adoring God is a bad rite. You complain of us that we have too many rites. Suppose we should complain of you that you have too few? God's worship may be hindered by too little ceremony, as well as by too much. We make no attack on you for what we might think a bald service. Where is your right to accuse our more elaborate worship?"

"But do you believe in a vital, godly, experimental piety?" asked the Deacon.

"Do I, a Christian minister, believe in being a Christian? for that is what your question means. I answer, Certainly. A true Christian is a man who worships God both in his prayers and in his deeds. The whole aim and office of the Church is to make her children, not delirious, nor fanatical, but quiet, pious Christians."

“But do not some of you,” asked the Deacon, “preach much more about the Church than about the Lord Jesus Christ?”

“That is another matter,” replied the minister, “which requires a plain answer. We say that there can be no Church without the Cross, and that there can be no Cross without the Church. The Church is the conduit of the Cross to man. In this world every life must have its own body, and the Church is the body that contains and restrains that supernatural life which Christianity is.”

All this was news to Deacon Hobbs. He could conceive of no other religion except his own; and of his own, no mortal had ever conceived except himself. To argue to a man like him was to address a man who had no ears, and the rector's argument left him as it found him, Deacon Hobbs. Yet he had a faint sensation floating about in his ungainly nature that here was a man who at least thought himself right; and he had been so far conciliated by Mr. Ardenne's words as to abstain from any further severely godly remarks.

“Now then, sir,” said the rector, “I wish to speak to you about your daughter. You see in what state she is. I have no intent to meddle with her against your wishes; and I have not done so. She is at my parishioner's house. I shall see her there. Have you any objection to my

attempting to make, by God's grace, a Christian of her?"

"My daughter," said Deacon Hobbs, "is a head-strong and rebellious child. You may say what you see fit to her. I have given her up."

And so the Deacon took his leave.

CHAPTER XXI.

A HOME FOR A HEART.

MR. ARDENNE did not see that day the invalid at Miss Kendrick's, for that lady kept good watch over her patient and would let no one see her. But the next day, when he came, Miss Mary admitted him with a smile. "Our patient is better now, and you may see her." Prudence Hobbs, under her gentle handling, had become herself again, so far as to be very quiet, and only an ill-defined sense of a great peril overhanging her remained. Her nurse had not spoken to her directly about religious matters, but in diverse ways, and especially in the daily prayers, she had impressed her with a sense that religion was meant to be something most gentle and full of love. The rector went to her, as he came in, very gently, and said in his fatherly way, "How is the sick child to-day? Let me see, I am half a doctor. Yes, there is no fever, and the pulse is quiet. Miss Mary, your patient does you great credit."

"Yes, she is quite herself again, only I fancy her mind is troubled about some things which you

may be able to explain to her. She wishes to be a Christian, and does not know how, and she has an idea that God will not have any mercy on her, He is so just and awful in His nature."

"It is a very singular view to take, though some hold it," said the minister. "This poor child here would think it very strange if I should tell her that fire would not burn; and yet, just as it is the quality of fire to have heat, so it is the very quality of God to have mercy. If a man or angel could take away His mercy, he would destroy God. And His mercy is so strong that men in this world never outweary it. He will have mercy on every child of His who will accept it, and only they who are blind to it or refuse it ever lack it. All God's names which He gives himself are merciful names. He is our Father, Christ is our brother, the Church is our mother, the Holy Ghost is comforter. It is true, as they tell you, that His law is vast, immutable, unyielding. This is right, since God's law, could it be changeable, would not be God's law at all, and no violation of it, unrepented, can ever pass unpunished. By that law, which we all break, we are all sinners, and sinners too of that order that by ourselves we cannot pay it what we owe it, and therefore by ourselves must perish. But that is only one half, and the lower half of the truth. God has not left us to wrestle with His law and

be conquered by it, for that would be to leave us to fight our fight in such a way as to be surely conquered. He has provided a way for our escape and victory so that we may be saved forever. And that way is Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ upon His cross made an atonement for the sins of the whole world, so that whoever thereafter should plead His atonement for his own sins should have his sins forgiven. And therefore all revelation, or the showing of God to men, is a showing forth of God's love and mercy. For all revelation is to save men, and our blessed Lord's coming on earth, and even the way he came, as a child, and all his actions on earth, show chiefly God's affection for us. Nay, we are taught that every hour the blessed Trinity, throned in Heaven and yet near our hearts, love us with a love passing the love of woman,—not the love of mothers for their children, but the vast, boundless, ageless love of the Divinity. Therefore Christianity, above all other religions, is a religion of love, and the Church, through whom true religion is taught men, is full of gentleness in all her words and offices. In her purest ages she has never driven men to God with the whip of fear, but she has drawn men to Him with the gossamer, but unbreaking, bonds of love. It is wrong, therefore, to think of God except as one ever ready to receive and save all His children. It is not difficult to begin to be a Christian."

"But how?" asked the young girl.

"Have you ever been baptized?"

"No, mother wished it, but father wanted me, he said, to wait until I had grown up and then decide for myself."

"First of all, it is necessary that you be baptized. Baptism is the door by which one enters into the Ark of Safety, the Church. But as you are grown before you are baptized, it is necessary for you to soberly choose to be so. It has no mystery about it, when you solemnly decide to endeavor to live in obedience to God, though the ways in which He helps us to keep our vows are indeed mysterious, as all His ways are. Are you willing to abstain from doing what He forbids, and willing to believe and do what He commands?"

"I am."

"Well, then, if you are, and understand what you say, you are ready to be baptized, as I will show you." And opening his Prayer-Book at the Sacrament of "Baptism of those of Riper Years," he showed her how the four questions to which every baptized person must give assent mean merely this. He also explained to her at length how the Church, demanding only a solemn consecration of a soul to God, nurtures it by definite methods through this world to the next, in the name and fear of Jesus Christ, and how what men call religion, since it deals with God, is full on

that side of mysteries, but on our human side is very plain and simple. In conclusion he said, "I never wish to tell you or any other young person that to be a Christian is an easy thing, for it is not an easy thing either to live well or ill, and the Christian life is a struggle against sin towards God; but what I wish you to understand is this, that the way to be a Christian is very plain. It is to submit your soul to obey God and to follow our blessed Lord. They whom you obey and follow will take care of the rest as they have promised."

Prudence Hobbs made no further reply. Then they had prayers together. "I leave you," he said "to the good care of our Heavenly Father. He will hear your prayers and give you His grace."

When the minister had gone away, Prudence Hobbs lay with her hands over her face for some time without speaking. Then she said to Miss Mary, who sat silently beside her, waiting,

"I wish to be baptized next Sunday."

CHAPTER XXII.

FLOWERS AGAIN.

THE accident of a broken arm had not kept Edward Vaughn from the Seatons'. In fact, he went there about as regularly as he ate his dinner. He went there both because it suited his mood and it was made pleasant for him to go. The gossips said it was a match. What did they know? What do they ever know? How to gather stray sticks out of the gutters, maybe, and kindle a fire with their tongues therein, that not all the water of two rivers could put out. The course of affairs, so far as Isabel Seaton touched her hand to them, moved on in a very placid manner. She was a girl to act up to the level of her opportunity with a man she fancied, and from her first waltz with him she was not indifferent to Edward Vaughn. When, therefore, he came to see her quite like a suitor, it pleased her to treat him quite as her lover. True, he was odd, and sometimes unmanageable by the hands of Madame Propriety, and his manners were occasionally stormy, but so far, since his mishap, he had been measurably quiet at his visits, and tractable to Miss Belle's

tutelage. It pleased that lady, therefore, quite waiving ceremony, when Mr. Vaughn came, to help him off with his coat in the hall, next to show him to the easiest chair in the house, which she had set for him in the recess of the front bow window, which looked across the rivers; then she brought him a taper with which to light his cigar, and when she had seen his lordship comfortable, sat down herself to entertain her guest with that bright, gossipy, ever-endless chit-chat about nothings which so many very clever people find so charming. There never was a Seaton woman who was not clever; and Miss Belle, that bright, healthy, vivacious blonde, with those round blue eyes so full of change and meanings, might have moved a greater Stoic than Edward Vaughn to admiration. That gentleman showed his gratitude in diverse ways: sometimes in the pleasant fashion of soft words that had no dispute in them, and then again in a certain bearishness which trampled down Miss Belle's amenities under its ungracious feet, until that lady was next to anger, or in despair. This was only his amiable way of showing that sometimes he liked to be petted for an invalid, and sometimes not. Upon the whole, however, he was behaving after the lover fashion.

Was he in love with Isabel Seaton? We will look deeper than ever she did into his heart and answer, for our satisfaction, "No." Edward

Vaughn was a man made to love a woman with that strong, unswerving, silent heart-tide of affection so dear to women, and which is to them health, strength, riches, when all else has gone. For Edward Vaughn began life with a man's heart in him, and with all that faith and truth which belong to good men, and as such had honored all women in a silent, gentle homage that bespeaks a princely nature; but his faith in women had withered quite away, and he never loved because he never trusted; and what we do not trust neither do we respect. He was no lover except in form. For love is human worship to a human creature. He knelt before a shrine whose divinity he despised. Yet, to save him from contempt, we say again that his was a nature to love a woman tenderly. It is a fashion to laugh at sentiment, and in these practical days of Mammon to weigh lightly as chaff those imponderable, filmy intangibilities we call the affections as between man and woman. But the man who cannot love as a man ought is not a man at all, and a man's love for woman, before the angels, is, next to his love for God, the one pure, musical strain amid the clamor of the iron wheels that grind life down from its mark. The age of chivalry has passed, and a better age, they say, begins in which woman is to be our equal. But she must be either queen or slave to us; there is no place for equality between us. When we call

her our equal we have already degraded her from her throne to our level. In woman are those strains of a pure being before which seraphs bow and angels worship, and by which time and eternity are governed. We call our blessed Lord a perfect man, and so he was; but this Son of Mary Virgin — this kingdom of His to which all creatures must subject themselves — have in them those dominant qualities which find their human expression best in woman. The Church, the faith, the spiritual life, are womanly. The seraphs, angels of love, are nearer God, they say, than the cherubs, angels of knowing; and God himself is Love. Heaven will not be so much perfect knowledge as perfect love. And as all pure things are born of love and wear the maternal features, tell us, is it man or woman in this world who is likest God in that? No; the age of chivalry has gone; but if in this world a great, deep-reaching thought ever moved men to a wise aim, it was when devotion to the idea of womanhood led the knight of old to wrestle, conquer self and wrong for woman, and through his love for her, in the fanaticism of his devotion, to love all pure and holy things in God. Edward Vaughn was no knight-errant. His heart by contact with the world had become encased in stone. But under the stone were still waters of life in prison. It was not in Isabel Seaton's scope to smite the rock till the waters should gush forth.

At the Seatons' it was comfortable and lively, and Miss Belle was certainly piquant. And as a taste for playing with edge-tools is common to many men, he took his turn at the pastime and was not afraid of his fingers. The Heidelberg students slash away at each other with swords for the excitement of it, and Isabel Seaton was his excitement in an else rather drowsy town. One morning at the Seatons' was so much like all the others that we may as well describe it.

"So you have brought me a bouquet again to-day? How kind it is of you."

"Yes, Miss Belle. For a one-armed man my hands are usually full in this household."

"Full of nothing worse than flowers, I trust."

"Yes, full of you. I am always on the lookout for some sharp speech of yours, to see that you don't get the best of me. I think when you are forty you will beat the town at words."

"Now, that is really unkind of you, Sir Orsin, to make me out such a scold, and when, too, I have just helped you off with your cloak so nicely; and there is the holder for the cigar ashes ready for you by your chair, you see. Is that your gratitude?"

Then Edward Vaughn takes a survey of the arrangements for his comfort, and confesses that of all sinners he is the greatest against her ladyship.

"Are you going to be quiet and well behaved this morning?"

"Quite so, but you are letting my flowers wither on the stand yonder." So the flowers are put in water and set in a vase upon the piano. When he has seen that done he says, "Come, now, and talk to me, while I smoke in the window yonder." So he smokes his cigar with Isabel Seaton near him, and they two talk. What? To report a conversation is like grasping at the sunshine. No man can do it. Edward Vaughn was a good talker and her elder, and she gave him that subtle sympathy of mind which sometimes led him to talk his best; and so it was that under the cigar smoke in his easy chair there were many curious things said which touched upon the mysterious things of life; and he, who had thought down into many questions, could say many striking words that instructed as well as conquered the mental respect of the woman beside him. Yet he seemed never quite in earnest about anything, but in a showman's spirit brought out his wares for your inspection, not anxious for you to buy, nor caring to defend them, provided his pride of opinion was not assailed too sharply, and then he would fight roughly, not for his truth, but for his way. Earnestness comes from love of something, and what did he love? Perhaps himself, certainly not truth—for how did he know that there was any truth? He was an

amateur philosopher; and an amateur anything is never very much in earnest. Yet, philosopher or what not, he managed to make himself agreeable to Miss Seaton in a very complex fashion of mingled tenderness and sarcasm, and while he often perplexed and irritated, he was certainly subduing her to his obedience.

"There sir, you are actually yawning." This was said after a vivid conversation upon the point as to whether one grew older faster in winter than in summer, Mr. Vaughn taking the summer as the more questionable side.

"Yes, I am yawning at my own mental emptiness; not at you, *mon ami*. I tell you I am disgusted with myself for the half way in which I hold all my opinions. Opinions are nothing to me but an amusement, and I am forever talking to hear what absurdities I can string together. Two fellows in a bar-room will pummel each other to prove their politics true, but I have no politics and no religion to fight for."

"Oh, you Epicurean, smoking a cigar. Is there nothing you would fight for?"

"Yes, my dinner — or you!"

"You put your dinner first."

"Well, then, you and my dinner — that is, if I were hungry. I fought for you up the river with that black horse of yours, though, you know. But

come now, a little music puts me all right. Play me something."

"What shall it be?"

"Something from "Norma" — "Casta Diva" or the prayer. I am always in the mood for "Norma." I hear in "Norma" the rush of the wind across the North Sea and its wailings in a dark midnight among the gnarled Druid oaks under which, to-morrow, they will set the wicker baskets full of victims, while the sharp knife flashes and the red fire gleams into the faces of bearded priests. That opera contains the storminess and blood hunger of ancient Britons, of whom I am a degenerate son."

"Bravo! That, now, is sensible. I shall sing "Casta Diva" for you." So she sat down at the piano to sing. Isabel Seaton played indeed exquisitely, and her fingers upon the piano keys had the movement of running water, so graceful was she; and in her singing she was exact and cultured, and what depended on the knowing she rendered accurately; but what was to be felt she failed in. Yet her music was the one thing in her that honestly pleased Edward Vaughn, if it did not rouse nor elevate him. So he turned the music for her while she sang from "Norma."

"What a singing bird you are. I thank you for that. That was well done, *mon ami*."

"What a mocking bird you are, *mon ami*."

Next time you come, if you are well behaved, I will have some new music for you ; some of Mendelssohn's."

Then Edward Vaughn made his adieus ; and after he had gone Miss Belle opened the windows to let out the smoke from her mother's lace curtains, and then came back to take a long look at the flowers upon the piano.

She had culled from that bouquet, and worn all that morning, just one branch of mignonette and a rose-geranium leaf on the white morning dress. There were other geraniums in plant about the house, and he knew it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MOTHER AND SON.

JOHN WALKER had become Mr. Edward Vaughn's yachtman. It is necessary to go back a little in this story to relate how all this came about. The wharf where that gentleman's yacht lay was just opposite Mother Walker's cottage. The next morning after her son came home, when that person went outdoors for an airing, to his great surprise the first thing he saw before him at the river's bank was a mast; and arguing therefrom that where there is a mast there must be a boat, with a sailor's instinct for a craft afloat he very soon shortened the distance between him and the wharf. He was dressed in his sailor rig of short blue jacket, rich in buttons, and a pair of blue cloth trousers that required a deal of hitching to keep them in place, and a glazed tarpaulin hat, and had that rolling gait which all sailors seem to have caught from the sea. Then he took a squint at the craft all over, with his eyes half shut in the nautical fashion, as if to keep too much wind out when it blows hard. It was a small but neat sloop, perfect in all its appoint-

ments and of a peculiar build to insure speed, and was indeed very fast. He went round to look at the bows. When he had taken a good look forward, he grunted out his satisfaction, and then said to himself, "That's a neat one. A perfect little lady, to be sure. She sits like a duck on the water, and she looks as though she could creep right into the wind's eye like the Flying Dutchman. That's the tautest little craft I ever seen afloat."

"So, then, you like my yacht," said a voice behind him.

The man turned round. It was Edward Vaughn in his sea rig. He gave a pull at his tarpaulin for a salute, and answered, "Yes, Captain, I could cross the Atlantic in her. She's a regular sea-bird."

"You are a sailor, my man?"

"Ever since I was a boy."

"Do you think you could sail that craft?"

"Try me, Captain."

"Well, I'll try you. Go on board there. We'll take a short turn down the river." So John Walker went on board, with his hand on the shrouds and a swinging jump on deck. Then he went forward to the forecastle, if the few feet before the one mast could be called so, gave one last hitch to his breeches, threw his tobacco quid over the side, and then took another general survey on deck.

“Pardon, Captain, who’s sailed this craft afore.”

“I have, generally ; but Bill Knox, a town man, who has been mackerel-fishing, as he tells me, has taken her out several times this spring, and hasn’t left things aboard in very good shape.”

“No, I never knowed a whaler or a coaster that ever knowed much about sailing a vessel. Things are left about on deck as though a greenhorn had been on board. The larboard shrouds need tautening, you see” (with another squint aloft), “and that mainsail’s furled as though a marine had done it. Before we h’ist anchor, just let me put things a little more ship-shape,” and the man went to work coiling away ropes, and putting things in place with the air of a man at home. Then they hoisted the sails and the anchor, and Edward Vaughn said,

“Come aft here, and take the helm. Your course is down the river to the point yonder.”

“Ay, ay, sir. Is it plain sailing here, and enough water?”

“Yes; water enough everywhere, when the centreboard is up.” So they sailed down the river with a quartering wind.

“Do you see the rock on that point below us, my man? If so, show me how close you can lay the Qui Vive to it, and not touch. It’s bold water. Do you understand?”

“Ay, ay, sir;” and John Walker, with no

more words, but locking straight before him, put the boat on to the rock until she almost grazed it, and yet swept on past it clear.

"Very well done, my man. You can manage a boat, I see. Now put her about, and sail back." So they sailed back, and John Walker said, by way of compliment, "She's like a horse with a soft mouth," which meant that she steered easily.

"Now, my man," Edward Vaughn said, when everything was made fast at the wharf, "I want somebody to sail my yacht, and take charge of her. I live up in the house yonder, and I want somebody I can trust. You are a sailor evidently; and though I expect you to be on hand night or day if I wish it, yet it's not very hard work, and I'll pay you for it forty dollars a month, winter and summer."

"I wouldn't mind doing that, Capt'n, so I can be with the old woman, and look after her a little."

"I ought perhaps to have first inquired who you are, but your face is an honest one. Do you belong in this neighborhood?" Then he told him his story, and who he was, and Edward Vaughn seemed interested. "Very well," he said, "the boat's in your care. When I want you, I will send to the house for you."

It was so that John Walker became Edward Vaughn's yachtman.

And it was refreshing to see how happy Mother Walker and her son grew to be over and about the care of that yacht and of one another. John had brought his kit, which contained itself in one monstrous sailor's chest full of the odds and ends of a sailor's life, into one of Mother Walker's chambers next the stairway, and swung his hammock overhead. Not a chair in his room would he have, nor table, but his chest served for both; and when at night he stood on that one chest to get into his hammock, the action had a sea memory to it, as though he was clambering into an upper berth. In the mornings he washed himself in a pewter basin outside on the stairs, and then threw the water, as it were, over the ship's side. He would have holystoned all his mother's floors had it not been for the bits of rag carpets which graced the same and the ignorance of the old lady, who thought "holystoning" meant something dreadful. She was strengthened in that opinion when in a spirit of compromise she allowed him to perform that singular office upon his own room, which he did by the aid of two of the smoothest stones he could find on the street, and a couple of pails of water. And never had there been such a noise in her house, and never such complaint from the people below stairs that the water soaking through had spoiled their plastering, as when Mother Walker's Johnny was found of her, bare

footed and kneed, scrubbing his chamber floor, as though it were a ship's deck. But although her son made as much of a ship as he could out of Mother Walker's house, he was the very best of sons. When he waited on her, he had an air about him as though he thought he was waiting on a queen, so gentle was he; and every night after she had said prayers for both, since she had the more learning it would have done one good to see the silent way in which he kissed his mother "good night" before he climbed into his hammock. And as for the mother, she prayed and gave thanks in her heart all day, and at the same time kept her hands busy preparing Johnny's meals. And so there was much peace and happiness in those three rooms of Mother Walker's old house.

But the best of all was when Johnny took his mother down to the yacht. One should have seen the pair as they went across the greensward, hand in hand to the wharf, the man going so carefully, and picking out the driest way for his mother in the dew. Especially after supper one should have seen the good mother in her white cap and checked shawl, smoking her pipe—for she had that English habit of her class—sitting upon an old spar, and chatting with Johnny at his evening work. What wonderful stories he told her of the sea; and how nicely he instructed her as to how one brings his ship to in a gale of wind, and what the

rules of the navy are. What hairbreadth escapes he himself had had, in order that he might tell these wonders when the sun was going down to a dear old woman in a white cap, who never was too tired to listen. How many questions she asked, and how ignorant she was, to be sure; but Johnny had any quantity of patience, and was bent by sign, word, metaphor, or anything in human speech or pantomime upon making his mother a sailor. If one could have heard the minute lessons he gave her in all sorts of nautical affairs, one would have vowed he was trying to prepare his mother to pass her examination as a midshipman, so eager was he to have her know it all. How afraid she was, to be sure, of the sea and of everything afloat? What coaxing it cost him to decoy her on board the yacht, and how straight he stood when his mother sat down for the first time by the tiller ropes, and he informed her for the hundredth time that the *Qui Vive* was the fastest craft of her size in the State! How anxious was she lest the planks should start and the yacht carry her down without warning, though the craft was moored to the wharf, and had only two feet of water under her keel. And then, lastly, when the pipe was smoked, and the work all done, how they two went home in the evening, mother and son together. How happy they were! How pure the great strong love with which mother and son love each other!

And there was One who once called the Hebrew maiden Mary, "mother." In the words husband and wife you may find the tenderness of our human love; in the words "mother" and "son" its strength.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DINNER OF HERBS.

A HALF-DOZEN gentlemen were waiting dinner on the piazza of River Nook. Most of them had come up from the city the night before for a yachting excursion to which Edward Vaughn had invited them for to-morrow. That gentleman now made his appearance from the stables, where he had been arranging for a drive for the party after dinner. They were mostly younger than their host.

“Well, gentlemen, how have you taken care of yourselves this morning?” he asked.

“Right well, thank you,” said several. “We have smoked your Havannahs and played carom quite to our hearts’ content.”

“That’s right. I hope you are all as hungry as bears. I have got some of the nicest brook trout for dinner that you ever tasted—those speckled fellows, not over-large, and fried as they should be in corn meal crisp and brown, fit for a king!”

“Bravo!” shouted the company.

“I shall give you Hock with them to-day, so that fish grown in our streams will be washed in

Rhine water. Besides, I caught them myself, not with a silver hook, as they say hereabouts, but by a good stout tramp Saturday, up the river. But where is Le Clerke?"

There was a shrug from several pairs of shoulders, and some one said in a very non-committal way, "Le Clerke has gone fishing, I fancy, on his own hook," and a significant smile went round.

"I don't wish to pry into any man's business," said Edward Vaughn, "but I see there's something up with Le Clerke, and what it is I can't imagine. I didn't know that he was acquainted with anybody in this parish. From the way you look I imagine there's a woman in the case."

"The fact is," said the man who stood next him, "Le Clerke is sweet on Isabel Seaton, who I hear is spending the summer here, and has probably gone to visit her."

"Isabel Seaton! Isabel Seaton! What do you mean, man?"

"Mean exactly what I say. It was reported last winter over town that they were engaged, but I know nothing except by hearsay. I have heard that he was very sweet on her."

"That's so," said several.

"By heavens! gentlemen, the devil will get his share of men and women before he's through with this world."

"Who ever doubted that?" said several with a

laugh. "But what has that to do with Le Clerke's calling on a lady?"

"Plenty. I want that lady for myself, and I won't have Le Clerke meddling."

"Ah! that accounts for the milk in that cocoa-nut," and the company fairly roared.

"We'd like to see you sweet on a woman, Vaughn. That would be rich."

"But don't you think I can be?—perfect nectar, running water, soft as a summer's morn, or a zephyr, anything, when there is a woman at stake? Laugh now, young gentlemen. I paid court to these goddesses before some of you there were out of arms, and I make a very sentimental lover."

"Edward Vaughn in love. Capital." And they roared at the joke.

"Very well," he said, "let them laugh that win. Look out for your sweethearts when I'm round. I am bound to marry somebody. I've thought strongly of the seamstress we have here occasionally. Then I should be sure to have my buttons always sewed on. Or perhaps I can pick up one of these fresh country girls among the hills, who blushes all over when you look at her and never knows what to do with her hands—in which case I could always count on fresh butter and perhaps she might milk the cows—how charming! That is to say, if I can't cage Isabel Seaton."

"But here comes Le Clerke and his terrier," said several.

While he is coming with a quick, nervous gait up the gravel walk, we had better take a look at him, since in this story he is like those cheap actors in a play who appear upon the stage only in one scene. Sam Le Clerke is a man of about twenty-five, short and stout built, with a pale, intellectual face and very black moustache and eyes to it, while he looks the man of the world he is. He has a gentleman's reserve of manner, and is known among his fellows as clever in whatever he tries, and is a favorite. Furthermore, and there is nothing remarkable in him.

"We are waiting dinner for you, my boy," said one of the group as he came up to the stoop.

"A thousand pardons, gentlemen. To keep dinner waiting is not to be excused. I exceedingly regret my offence. Business detained me."

"Pleasant business, we hope."

"Very."

"Excuse me a moment, till I get a little of this dust off. I will be down at once," and the young man passed through the hall door to his chamber.

"Sam does not look well to-day," said one.

"No, he was up a little too late last night at carom, and is smoking hard."

The butler came out on the stoop and whispered something to his master. "I am sorry to say,

gentlemen," said the latter, "that dinner will be late twenty minutes. It was sharp three in order to go riding, and it's that now. In the country here, to get a punctual dinner is a miracle that's not seen every day. If any of you are starving, you'll find crackers and cheese in the billiard room. Excuse me, gentlemen, a moment." So while the gentlemen arranged themselves in divers attitudes of resignation waiting their dinner, Edward Vaughn went up to Sam Le Clerke's room. He found that young man hurriedly dressing. He went at his work in his own blunt way, which was perhaps the best. "I wish to ask you, Le Clerke, if there is anything between you and Isabel Seaton?"

The young man faced him with a steady gaze and then said coolly, "Till to-day that lady was engaged to be my wife."

"The devil she was. It is impossible."

"I have stated to you the fact."

"Any man who knows me, knows that I am the last man alive to meddle with other people's affairs, but I have my reasons for being curious about this matter, which I will presently give you. I mean no harm. I swear to you I mean to be your friend. But tell me, how do you two stand?"

"Miss Seaton broke her engagement with me this very morning." (This was said in the same cool way.) "I have all my letters back again, and she will have hers when I get back to town."

"What reasons did she give?"

"O, she had a mouthful of them: she was too young; incompatibility of temper; that she was afraid she did not love me — all the dear little things women say when they wish to break their engagement."

"And you?"

"I told her that she had not been too young to plight her faith to a man who honestly loved her, and that she was rather late in her discoveries, and that if it suited her it certainly suited me,— anything, you know, that was civil to the woman and not like a puppy."

"But what do you think of her, anyhow?"

"Think of her? I don't know what to think of her, and I don't care. I was in love with her, and that's enough to keep my mouth shut. I don't think I know much about her. I suppose she has the way of women." Edward Vaughn, when he was very much excited, had a way of being very quiet outside and speaking low. Yet his face, when after a long silence of meditation he lifted it up, showed lips firm set, and a smile in the gray eyes that seemed dangerous.

"So, then," he said slowly, "this is it. This is Isabel Seaton. Humph! I might have known as much.

"I think I can give you a little insight into this matter, Le Clerke," he said, "and I will be frank

with you. It has been a rule of my life never to cross another man's path in a love affair, and from that conduct I have never knowingly deviated. I have followed that rule, simply because for a gentleman there can be no other. Yet I fear I have crossed your track, and this is the way of it. Isabel Seaton lives, as you know, summers, in this town. I met her here. She put herself at once in a position towards me, as one perfectly free to receive addresses. In my way, which is not much of a way, because it is not a very sincere one, I have paid mine to her and she seems to have accepted them. At least it looks so. As I say, if I had known that I was interfering with any human being, I would rather have had my hand cut off at the wrist than done so, because I meant nothing, and might injure somebody; and a man would be merely a coward to make trouble of this sort just to amuse himself. You know just as well as I do what to think of a woman who under such circumstances acts as Miss Seaton has. But that is her affair. It is my business merely to tell you this, and to say how much I regret having unintentionally interfered with you."

"There's not much harm done, anyhow," he answered. "A woman who can conduct herself in that fashion, a man may be glad to be rid of. And however much I may have thought of Isabel Seaton, what you tell me ought to satisfy me to

let her alone, with thanks for my riddance. We men are but indifferent honest, anyway, but somehow we think and wish women to be angels; but I swear to God" (and here for the first and last time during the interview he showed a man's passion), "if I loved a woman better than I did my God, if she played me false I should despise her."

"That's said like a man, my dear fellow. And now let me tell you something which you don't know. All this is in the Seaton blood. I know them well. I meddled with one of their women years ago, and she led me a worse chase than yours. I thought this chit might be honest; but she is like all the rest. It isn't in them to be straightforward in their love affairs, but they must intrigue a little — just for the spice of the thing. There was something left out when they were made up, and what that is I can't exactly say, only that they are not to be trusted. And in my judgment you are well rid of her."

"Perhaps I had better hand you over my letters as my successor in office. They are sweet, and with a change in the subscription might answer you," Le Clerke said with a bitter smile, as he proceeded to unload his pockets of sundry packages of letters.

"Ah! well, yes. I tell you a woman like that hasn't got any heart. Bah! Men are bad enough,

but a woman like this — is not worth talking about. Burn up those letters in a smoky fire and cover them over with ashes — but then, the ashes are clean.”

“Very good.”

So they two burnt up the letters in the grate.

“Now then, my boy, wash your hands and let’s go down to dinner.”

“You do not blame me?” he said as the two went down the hall stairs.

“No.”

“Well, then, give us your hand on that.”

So the two men shook hands. “Do you intend to cultivate Miss Seaton?” Le Clerke asked.

“Cultivate her? You shall see.” And the grim smile, mixed tiger and satyr look, passed over the face which could be sometimes handsome. “I *shall* cultivate her, you may be sure.”

Dinner was announced just as they came down stairs. It was the habit of Edward Vaughn to give good dinners, upon a principle that at a dinner table civilization on its material side should culminate; and this was one of them. It was also a dinner well taken; and among the gay gentlemen who dined together that day, Sam Le Clerke and Edward Vaughn were the gayest of the gay.

CHAPTER XXV.

A YACHTING PARTY.

“How shall I get rid of your yachting party, Vaughn?” said Sam Le Clerke to that gentleman, whom he found very early the next morning alone in the hall, overlooking some fish-lines which were to be carried down to the boat for the day’s sport. “I wish to avoid meeting my adorable lady, Miss Seaton, and I should like to do it without setting the fellows talking.”

Edward Vaughn laid down the lines and took a look at the speaker. “Yes, I see. How shall it be? You haven’t broken an arm or a leg, have you?”

“No, but I have a furious headache!”

“Well, that will do. No man should venture out in the sun with a sick headache, especially when he don’t want to go. Say that to me, before the crowd, before we start.” So when the young men were on the piazza after breakfast, rigged for a day’s yachting, Le Clerke made his excuses, and was allowed to stay at home.

Edward Vaughn’s yachting party had been advertised by sundry invitations of his in several

of the most distinguished Aubrey families, and by consequence a bevy of young ladies, dressed in the free and easy style of picnics, that is, sensibly, was already on the wharf when the party from River Nook made its appearance. Then followed the usual introductions, and the company went on board the yacht. Both Isabel Seaton and Lucy Farewell were there. The rest were the usual Aubrey girls bound on a holiday, with a festival glee on their faces, and but one matron among them. So, while the gentlemen were getting under way, the gentler sex, having bestowed sundry shawls and reticules in safe places for future use, enthroned themselves on the shady side of the deck to save their complexions, and awaited the grave affairs which would surely follow the gentlemen's release from making sail. Edward Vaughn had already managed to say in a half-whisper to Isabel Seaton, "I shall steer, and therefore I want you to take a seat by the helm. I should make somebody jealous if I should arrange a seat there for you, so you must please go yourself." And that lady, quite as her natural right, was in the stern, with a blue veil over her face in broad sunshine, close to where Edward Vaughn was to be, waiting for him. It was a bright summer's day, with just a breath of wind to smooth the wrinkles out of the mainsail of the *Qui Vive*, as she swung out from her berth into

the silent current, with her head down stream. Very soon the company had divided themselves, according to some mysterious law of affinity, into groups, where they chatted, sung snatches of sea songs, and talked tender, rambling, pointless small talk quite in the fashion of such assemblies.

Before the day was over there were at least a half-dozen pairs who were not certain but that they were dead in love, such subtle forces of the tender god-child haunt such places, though the passion usually dies out with the passing of the summer's day when it first sees the light. Edward Vaughn steered his own boat, with Isabel Seaton beside him. To-day he was unusually quiet and attentive, and quite to her mind, she thought. He was even gentle for him, and disposed to silence, yet to a shrewd onlooker there was a firmness to his lips and a certain preciseness in his attentions to her which boded no good; for with those we love we are never over-precise or guarded. There was in his face, indeed, that peculiar calmness which the player so often shows at the Homburg tables when his Napoleons are piled upon the baize and he watches the turning of the wheel; for it was in him to play his dangerous game to the last venture, and somebody, he knew, must break. Still, he looked very much the lover. While he steered he gave Miss Belle, in a low voice, the points of his boat and explained how things were done on

shipboard, and then a lesson in steering, when, with those two round, gloved hands upon the helm, she managed to keep the *Qui Vive* not more than three points off her course. "Steady, *ma chère*, not too close to the wind. You see the jib forward begins to shake a little; too close," and a large hand was laid very quietly upon the gloved hands, which moved not beneath the pressure. "There now, so." And so it was. Isabel Seaton had the wit to do anything well she undertook, and Edward Vaughn confessed to himself before the morning passed that she would make a capital helmsman. In fine, the groups, before an hour passed, had concluded that the two had taken the lover's leap into the dreamland of constant souls. Bah! It was a comedy that might grow to tragedy. The young men from the Nook did everything but stare; and wondered about Sam Le Clerke's headache. They thought several things, but said nothing. What they thought came upon the whole to this: "Vaughn is not a man to meddle against any man, and women are queer. He has not gone back on Le Clerke. But then, what has happened? Who knows?" So they smoked their cigar, and paid their own court to the damsels beside them while they sailed down the river.

"You must certainly help me, *ma chère*, or things will go wrong on the yacht. The Scrip-

tures say, 'it is not good for man to be alone,' and the boys yonder evidently think so, and so do I. I cannot manage my affairs unless you come to the rescue."

"What more can I do for you than steer your yacht as I have all the morning?"

"It pleases a woman to hold the reins or the helm, you know, and virtue is its own reward. But now I want you to make a sacrifice for me. The fact is, these folks must all be fed. What a bore this eating business is. If ever I have the making of men they shall never have stomachs; and the Americans are always biting away at something. So are the English—a Frenchman or an Italian is more reasonable. The long and short of the matter is that it is lunch time, and love-making always makes folks hungry. Half of these people are famished already. I wish you to help me set out lunch in the cabin."

"I shall be delighted to help you, Sir Edward."

"There! Sir Edward again! How very formal. Haven't I told you divers and several times that you are to call me Edward?"

"And haven't I told you divers and several times that it is highly improper?"

"I have no doubt of it. But what of that? A woman usually says one thing and does another, and I take it for a good sign when one of the sisterhood refuses me anything. Besides, you

make the prettiest of mouths calling me Edward. Try it."

"You have a very natural way of making yourself disagreeable when you choose, Edward Vaughn, and after your good behavior so far this morning I am surprised at your vexing me in this fashion."

"Say Edward."

"No."

"But I am captain of this yacht. Who refuses to obey the captain's orders on board ship? Suppose I command you. What would you do then?"

"Command a lady, Edward Vaughn? I am shocked by you."

"I am a great sinner as ever. But please leave off Vaughn and call me Edward. As for commanding you, I have done nothing else but obey ever since I knew you. Come now."

"You are the most unreasonable man I ever knew, and that is saying a great deal. What possible good can it do you for me to call you Edward?"

"It will please me."

"Yes, please you, as it pleases men to have their own way, conceited creatures that they all are. Do you think I am going to please you?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it. You always please me, especially when you have the

haughty air as now. And, besides, you ladies are so generous. As for my own way, I don't see much of that when you are about. You never do anything I wish. Be singular for once, and oblige me."

"Is that true?"

"As true as a great many things I say when you are so cruel. Come now, please."

Isabel Seaton chose to hesitate after all this coaxing; and, therefore, Edward Vaughn chose also to be quiet to give her time to yield. So, after a while, he said: "I am waiting, *ma chère*."

"For what, pray?"

"To have you oblige me in that little matter."

"What an obstinate man you are. I am positively afraid of you, you are so wilful. Please be quiet."

"Right again. Exactly as you say. I should be sorry to have my behavior so uncivil as to contradict your ladyship. You compel me to modestly insist that you call me Edward."

"You tire me. How can I break my word?"

"You made no promise, or, if you did, a bad promise is better broken than kept. Come now, be the sensible girl you are. If I did not wish it, I should not ask it. In so small a matter why are you so unkind? Will you help me spread lunch?"

There was still no answer.

"Please now, I am waiting."

Isabel Seaton yielded at last, with that quick, uncertain half-laugh which women use when they are about to do a thing equivocal. She said: "Yes, Edward."

"Thank you, *ma chère*," and there was just a shade of contempt visible at the corners of his mouth. He thought: "This is the woman who gave Sam Le Clerke his headache." Then he called John Walker aft to the helm, while the two went into the cabin to prepare lunch.

Edward Vaughn, having carried his point, was too clever to behave as though he knew it; and so, while he helped Miss Seaton arrange lunch, he was one of the most quiet and deferential of men. It is a most singular law, which wise men have often remarked, that there can be no home without a wife. It is also true that a table is seldom well set except by a woman. And so it was that a score of men like Edward Vaughn could not lay out lunch on a yacht's cabin table as Isabel Seaton did. The skill might have been in the way she arranged the bouquets or the geranium leaves around the butter, or in a subtle blending of divers dishes into a dinner picture, or in something else. Certain it is that, when lunch was spread, Edward Vaughn admired the fashion of it.

"What a splendid housekeeper you would

make, Miss Belle. You have set that table very cleverly. I want a housekeeper, as I have told you."

"What wages will you pay?"

"Ah! wages! Are you for sale? I will pay good wages."

"What?"

"Well—I will pay myself, house, horses, dog Thor, all my old clothes, and a little bank stock to boot, for a housekeeper like you."

"I should like the horses and Thor, but, as for you, I should have to know first whether you would behave well, or as you did this morning."

"If you buy an estate you must take it with the live stock on it as it stands, and you can't have my horses without me. Will you take us all together at a single dose?"

"Now you tease me again. I have set your table for you. Now you should go call your guests, and ask me no more questions."

So he went up on deck in a very free and easy manner and called the company to lunch. Some men have a way of showing by their very gait what passes in their minds; and his, just now, was a tinge reckless, and spoke disgust, as it were, at everything; yet such things are seen not so much with our eyes as with our instincts, and Isabel Seaton's were by no means sensitive. So the company had lunch.

It had been arranged that the excursion should be to the Indian Well; and when the lunchers came on deck they found the Qui Vive at the bank, just where a deep glen ran back in among the hills. So the party — baskets, shawls, and all — went up the glen. It was a gleesome company that went clambering over the great boulders of the river bed and in among the hills, youth among the young leaves flecked with sunshine; and withal a pleasant sight, that gaily dressed and blithesome company, as it strolled among the trees in pairs, or made itself comfortable on the broad rocks the river had left dry. Every one fared on as they chose, but most went up to the Well. The Indian Well was something like a vast stone goblet, hollowed out by an earthquake, and then polished down in shape by the babbling brook that poured for ages over its west edge, to fill up its depths with the crystal flood of living waters. The Well was open on one side, and hence flowed such waters as the fountain could not hold. Its gray sides were overdraped with living mosses, and the brakes grew everywhere in its crannies, and the birds built nests in its stone hollows over the flood. It was a broad, round pool with a foamy stream down falling to it, where the trout hide in the warmest days — and deep. It was an old tradition that here the Indians held their midsummer feast, and camped on the hills around it. To-day the children of the pale-face

made the old woods ring with song and laugh, and under the trees they danced and wore out the golden hours with such bright, blithesome pastimes as it pities one should ever pass away from young hearts either in night or winter.

Edward Vaughn and Isabel Seaton devoted themselves to each other, and quite exclusively took a stroll by themselves in a privacy which no one invaded. During the course of the afternoon they came upon Lucy Farewell, at her old pastime of gathering mosses, and with hands full of wood flowers.

Mr. Vaughn reintroduced the ladies. "This is an acquaintance I made trout fishing — the Lady of the Woods."

Miss Seaton regarded her with a half-patronizing air.

"How charming!" she said. "I have always thought I should like to have been one of the Babes in the Wood; only the risk of taking cold is so great. Pray tell me, Miss Farewell, do you like it?"

"Yes; I like the woods, and to-day I have found some very rare flowers. Here is a fringed gentian, not yet in bloom."

"I dare say. But is it not tiresome, with nobody to talk to?" Lucy looked at the speaker. "What an elegant lady!" she thought, "and yet she does not like the woods. How can any one

not like them?" Yet Miss Seaton spoke truth. The two women were vastly unlike. The one was a child of nature, and loved her mother; the other was a changeling who had forgot her relationship. It is the test of a woman that she love God's works. If she does not love them, she is condemned in a man's eyes to be less than the best.

"I am never tired of the woods," she said.

"I cannot understand that. Can you, Mr. Vaughn?"

"I? I am never tired of anything except eating. The woods are the place to shoot woodcock, and are worth fifty dollars an acre, so they say. I like the woods hugely."

"Come now, be sensible," one woman said. The other said nothing, but arranged her flowers. The silent woman troubled Edward Vaughn more than the other. He felt himself her inferior, and that somehow her nature stood apart from his and looked down on him. So, as was his way, he amused himself talking nonsense.

The interview rather bored him. "The fact is, ladies, I am a poor hand to settle such high things. I suppose you are both right. One of you prefers a ball-room and one a hill-side. To waltz with one, and pick nosegays with the other, is all the same to me. I am at your service — both." And after some more random talk they parted, and Edward Vaughn strolled on with his companion

who disliked the woods. They came back finally to the Well, on the pure sand at its verge, over which the stream passed out to the river.

“Come here, *ma chère*,” he said, “and see your face in the pool.”

“Yes, Edward.”

“How obedient! Why do you call me Edward?”

“Because you have been so good to-day and have kept all the brambles away from me, and are so gentle.”

“Excellent! I shall grow to be a saint, perhaps.”

“Be quiet. There I am.”

Edward Vaughn looked over her shoulder into the pool. It was certainly a splendid woman — lithe, blithe, in health, a perfect creature of her kind; and the face in the pool ought to have been an angel's. To Edward Vaughn there was always the flavor of the tropics about her. The snows are vestal; so are the Alpine flowers fed of the glacier's coldness. But in her the sun and the perfumed breath of flowers which bloom where the clime is torrid. He bent over her till his breath was on her cheek and the blonde hair.

“Two faces in the pool, *ma chère*; two lovers that have made no vows; two people who ought to be very happy.”

The woman made no answer, but laughed her

low, uncertain laugh again. She bent down towards the water.

"Hold, *ma chère*; your dress will fall in the water; I will hold it." So he held her trail while, with a child's glee almost, she pleased herself throwing the water with her round, dimpled hands into a spray of diamond drops, which fell into the dark pool again and disappeared.

"This should have been a beautiful creature," he thought. "But so was Blanche De Forest. The devil ought to be a woman, and then he might have his own way with us all. He is the wrong sex." And a curious, ill-omened smile played around his mouth, while the woman dabbled in the water, and a very peculiar, unsaintly man held patiently her dress.

"Flood tide, captain; and the boat floats." It was John Walker.

"All hands on board," he shouted. "Come, *ma chère*;" and the party went down to the *Qui Vive*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NIGHT AFLOAT.

“WELL, what is the prospect, John?” said Edward Vaughn when he came on board and had taken a look at the sloop’s streamer, which hung lazily about the mast in the slant sunshine. “Shall we get a breeze this evening?”

“I’m afeard not, Capt’n, after sundown, and there’s hardly a thimble-full at present; but the tide will set us up a little, if we can haul the sloop into the stream.” So they managed to haul the sloop out from the shore, and floated upstream with the tide.

“What would you think of spending to-night aboard the *Qui Vive*, Miss Belle?” Vaughn said, as after an hour or so of this sort of business the mainsail of the sloop wrinkled up for want of wind, and they made no headway. “In ten minutes the tide will turn, and then we shall drift down-stream, and the sky in the west looks too red for wind to-night. I think we shall have to anchor here, unless the mermaids take us in tow.”

“It would be right nice, I think, Edward.”

“Thank you. That will give us a nice *tête-à-tête* under the stars, ah, *ma chère*?”

“I am happy, you know, where you are.”

“Bravo! I will fasten the *Qui Vive* down to the river bottom, so that I have plenty of time to tell you a thousand sweet things, under the night. I wonder how our lovers yonder on the deck will take it?”

“They wont object to it, I am sure,” she said with a laugh.

So he went forward among the groups. “I am sorry to say, my friends, we must anchor, and perhaps stay here all night. If anybody must go home, I will set them ashore in the yacht’s boat.” No one wished to go. Several had found the yacht a very charming place, where dreams dwelt. A night on the river with such pleasant company was a rare sensation. No regrets followed the anchor as it went rattling over the side, down among the mermaids; and a right royal merry-making followed, through the sunset and the eventide far on into the night. And when, hour after hour, the stars swung themselves steadily along their mighty orbits to the mid-skies, or descended towards the west, and the young hearts below them, full of their fresh spring life, laughed and chatted until they fell asleep, one thought soberly of how under the same old skies from age to age the human creatures live their strange

mortal life, so full of solemn things, while the stars see them and never seem to pity.

Edward Vaughn, apart from the time it took him to overlook the comfortable disposition of his guests, kept himself strict and fast to the blonde lady who called him Edward. He had wrapped her up in a huge army blanket to keep off the dew, and they sat late in the stern of the *Qui Vive*, talking such things as he had promised her; only he was moodish and at times had a certain bitterness about his words, which even she could not fail to see. And as the night wore on, he seemed bent on saying the strangest things, as it were, about women. And this too, when Isabel Seaton was behaving in her blindest fashion. The fire in his heart was not love, but rather a scorn for everything human, and even she grew alarmed.

"Why, Edward, how can you say such things to me? Have I wronged you?"

"Wronged me? No. Didn't I tell you I was Blue Beard and you shouldn't come too near my heart? People that play with fire get burnt. I am flame."

"But to-night you seem to hate everybody."

"I do not hate men, but I despise them—the whole human race, with exceptions. I love my mother—and some others. But the rest, they crawl, they fawn, they speak you fair and stab

you underhand; they sell themselves for a dirty sixpence, if nothing better offers, and they make this world a great dirty sty of lies. I want another deluge to wash things clean, and I myself am too mean ever to be admitted into the second ark, if they have one. Bah!"

"But you will except women, for my sake, Edward?"

"Yes, for your sake, most mighty queen of my heart. Yes, women are perfect. They always are so honest, so full of truth, so sincere, so loyal, so unselfish. They are angels, archangels — I have always found them so."

"Do you really mean what you say?"

"Mean? I mean everything — nothing. Woman is the Sphinx — the riddle. That Egyptian woman, cut out of stone, and looking with unmoving, unshut eyes across the Nile land, has kept her secret thirty centuries. Your sex will keep theirs longer. I adore women. I wonder what the medical students find under the knife in the dissecting room. It must be great fun dissecting a feminine heart, for instance. I wonder whether one ever found an honest dream, a pure thought there, with his knife. It must look well under the microscope, and so gentle, so tender, you know. A woman's heart? Bah!" and he laughed a hard, reckless laugh, as if in a pain which he despised.

"How can you care for me, then, if you think so?"

"As a man who thinks so can for anybody, and no otherwise."

"Am I to blame for what other women have done? Have I wronged you?"

"Nobody wrongs me any more. I wrong somebody whenever I get a chance."

"What a noble, generous spirit you are, Edward Vaughn."

"Thank you, my dear, I know it. How easily you framed that pretty mouth of yours to say that sweet thing. You are a charming judge, and I had rather be slain by you than kissed by some folks."

"Whatever I am, Edward Vaughn, I am a woman; and if you think of us in that way, you had better leave me. I am no better than my sex."

"I never mean to be personal. I did not say anything of you. But as you wish it, I will go away."

There was no answer. Isabel Seaton had pride, strong but not pure, and therefore she had not for the first time abased it in this conversation with Edward Vaughn. And besides, she had her point to reach. But she was now fairly angry, and her wrath controlled her for this time, so that she would have broken with the man who so angered

her. It was wise in him to leave her, so he went forward carefully among the sleepers, with no more particular purpose than to let her passion have time to cool. What did such a man care for her or any woman? What could he care? There was one figure, wrapped in a shawl, sitting by the rest and evidently awake. He bent down towards it in the darkness. "Who is this?" he said in a low tone.

"Lucy Farewell."

"And you are awake while all the rest are asleep? Are you not tired?"

"Very, but I can't sleep, and so I am spending the night awake."

"And with nobody to talk to?"

"Yes, I like to be alone. I am watching these stars, and they are company for me. When I see the stars at night I think of the dead — of the angels — of a great many things."

"You are a romantic lady."

"I don't know, sir, what I am; but I have told you the truth. And to show you that I am a practical person, please tell me what time we shall get up the river in the morning. I must be back to my school."

"It is difficult to say, Miss Farewell. So you teach school?"

"Yes; I am what people about here call 'a schoolmarm.'"

"What do you do in your school?"

"I write copies, teach lessons, keep the little folks in order, teach the catechism — what teachers usually do in a parish school."

"And you do this every day?"

"Yes."

"You are too young to be cooped up every day in this fashion. I should think you would grow tired of it."

"No; it is my duty, and a pleasure."

"What is duty?"

"What one ought to do, sir."

"And suppose one should not do one's duty?"

"I do not understand you. Do you think I, or any one is free not to do our duty? Do we not live for that?"

"I am a poor hand at deciding such high matters. Some people think one's duty is to make one's self comfortable; and teaching school, I should fancy, would not be exactly in their line."

"I hope you are not one of them."

"I? I have no opinions about anything. I eat my dinners and sail this yacht."

Lucy Farewell made him no answer. He at least had talked no nonsense to her, and there was an unconscious influence about her which forced him to be civil. He said as he went away,

"If we don't get up the river in season, John Walker shall row you up in the boat."

“Thank you.”

Edward Vaughn went back to the angry woman in the stern.

“Have you quite forgiven me, Miss Belle?”

“You have vexed me, Edward, beyond endurance.”

“I told you at the start what a wretch I am, and now I have proved it. But angels forgive, you know.”

“I am not an angel, nor do I feel like one; and I belong to the sex that you think so wicked.”

“Let bygones be bygones. Come now, *ma chère*, forgive me; I was very uncivil. I am a lawless, moody being, yet I did not mean to pain you. Let us kiss and be friends.”

“If you promise to behave, I will be your friend;” and a hand was reached out from the folds of the grey blanket in which he had wrapped her. So that quarrel ended with the two beside each other, the man saying many tender things, not one of which was meant. They were not a saintly couple that sat by the *Qui Vive*’s helm.

In the late morning time the *Qui Vive*’s company, all a little jaded and very hungry, were landed safely at the wharf. Lucy Farewell had been rowed up the river four hours earlier, as she was promised.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MUSICAL IN AUBREY.

ONE day, the week following the events narrated in the last chapter, when Edward Vaughn came home late from a long horseback ride across country and entered his room, he perceived a delicate perfume in it. He smiled in his own peculiar way, for he knew the cause of it. He found a note upon his table. It was a little note with the red initial letter "S" over the wax seal, and directed in a woman's hand. He knew it well, for he had had several already from the same quarter. First, he picked it up and looked at it; then he threw it back on the table again, and proceeded to divest himself of a pair of very muddy boots and to change his coat for his dressing-gown. Then he lighted his cigar and poked the cannel coal in the grate into a blaze, and when he had prepared to be comfortable he sat down at the table, and, taking up the note, proceeded to examine the outside of it. It was very neatly sealed and writ, only the penmanship was, he thought, a trifle too masculine for a lady's. The letters were over-large, but the stroke of them was thin, as a woman's

is, and to him, who prided himself on learning character from handwriting, the note before him was a study. He held it up to the taper before him, and its lines showed dimly through its cover. The perfume of it actually filled the room; a subtle, intoxicating fragrance, that might affect a man to dreams, either good or bad, as his nature prompted him. He had years before amused himself by associating different characters with different perfumes, and he was wont to hold, among men, that you could tell a woman by the perfume she used. Indeed, he had gathered out of history how, in all ages, women, as the matrons in the Roman Empire, when they grew in their luxury to be anything but angels, grew also to be greatly skilled in perfumes, till, as it were, these became the intoxication and delirium of their sense of smell. The perfume of Isabel Seaton's note had nothing in it of violet or crocus, nor of the spring flowers which bloom among snow waters or among the high pine hills of temperate climates, but it was altogether tropical, sharp, penetrating, and overmastering, as of a land where the great, rich, intoxicating flowers yield, under the hot sun, their sweets to the voluptuous and heavy, heated air—the perfume of an eastern sultan's palace. It might have been the subtle impressions of this perfume that filled his chamber which led Edward Vaughn into a long reverie as he held the note in

his hand; and in that reverie he travelled back through many past affairs that had met him in foreign lands, and dreamed of things not very high nor vestal, but which had about them the fragrance of this tropic perfume. Then, at last, he deliberately broke the seal and read. The substance of all that we are concerned to know was in this sentence: "We are to have a musical company on Wednesday evening, Edward, and I wish you to come up and talk over with me the guests to be invited." When he had read it over once he threw the letter back upon the table and yawned. Nor did he forget Sam Le Clerke's letters, which they two had burnt up in a smoky fire.

So, accordingly, he went up next day morning to Isabel Seaton's, and in the favorite alcove before described, where he was used to make himself comfortable, they two, the woman on a low ottoman beside him, looked over her list of invitations.

"I do not see Lucy Farewell's name here," he said.

"No; her name is not there."

"But why not?"

"Why do you ask? Because I have not put it there. Is not that reason enough?"

"By no means. Why in the world *did* you leave her off, *ma chère*?"

"If you must know, because I do not like the person."

“Why not?”

“Do you wish me to tell you? If I must, I think her a little stupid — rustic, an uncomfortable person who annoys me. Besides, I do not wish to have a visiting acquaintance with her. She is not in my circle.”

“Nonsense; she is a lady; and suppose she isn’t of your set, what difference does that make?”

“All the difference in the world. You can’t mix people up in society. Do you know that she teaches the parish school?”

“Bah! now you are aristocrat, Belle. I thought you were too sensible for that. You are going to exclude her because she earns her bread as an honest woman should.”

“You wish to annoy me, Edward. You think exactly as I do, if you would only say what you think.”

“You are wrong there, Belle. I hate this American aristocracy, as it calls itself. It is of the pinchbeck order, and extremely vulgar. I can respect the claims of family when it is a thousand years old, and its men have been gentlemen, and lived and died as gentlemen under the king’s flag, and have in them blood made blue by a long strain of high-toned and well-bred men, but this aristocracy here, of yesterday, out of a pork barrel, or a cotton store, or a smith’s forge, bah! it ought to be merely laughed down. It is too

absurd to be angry with. No, Belle. Here if one woman has two gowns to her back and another has only one, the woman who is better off by one gown than her neighbor looks down on her. What a sublime height she occupies with the two gowns! No! What I say is, position is relative, and, measured by European standards, we are, most, beggars and upstarts. America was peopled by honest poor folks, who were not ashamed to be poor but were proud to be that; and when their descendants give themselves airs I laugh. I look through their pretension to a log cabin and an honest woman in a blue woollen dress driving cows home from pasture, while her good man is hoeing corn in the field, to find their coat of arms."

"How can you talk so, Edward?"

"How? Because I mean it, and I don't mean everything I say. You never turn me out of doors when I come to see you, because why? Because I am well dressed and live in a big house and spend money. But my great-grandfather was a hard-working man, and yet you would have turned him out of doors if he had come in a homespun dress to court you, though he was an honest man who made his own money, while all I do is to spend it. Why don't you set me adrift, Lady Isabel?"

"All persons do not get their deserts; and be-

sides, I like you. You are so very amusing. You amuse me now."

"Well, but I am not in a very amusing mood, I assure you. I mean all this. I want Lucy Farewell invited. I honor her. She earns her own bread, and I eat somebody's else. I do that because I do not amount to anything, and never expect to. I should be much more of a man if I did some honest work like other men. I am a drone, and I know it; but I never give myself airs, which is one of my few virtues, and I respect every man who works. You young women would be much better off if, instead of forever dressing and eating your dinners, you had some useful work to do; and, above all, you can't afford to despise those who have."

"What would you have me do?"

"Mend your own stockings, and make bread — something."

"And what will *you* do?"

"Me? Don't follow my example. I am the wreck of a man. But I am going to learn a trade before I die."

Isabel Seaton lifted her pretty eyebrows in a very significant fashion, as she said, "Edward Vaughn a mechanic? Charming!"

"Very well. An honest mechanic is worlds above a mean gentleman, as folks call a man who spends other people's money; and I may turn out

one yet. The man who doesn't do something to feed himself is a nuisance — that is all." There was no answer to this last vehemence of a man who for once was sincere. After a long pause, as nothing was said, he returned to his point. "I wish you to invite Lucy Farewell."

"It cannot be done."

"Well, then, you may make your own choice. If she doesn't come, neither will I. I intend to stand by her against all this nonsense."

The man spoke almost angrily, and there was a look in his gray eyes that showed his will was not to be safely hindered. Isabel Seaton had some time since found out that in his stormier moods there was no use opposing him. She therefore said nothing, though she was greatly vexed. She held down her head over her list, until one or two great tears fell upon the paper. The tears were out of her eyes, not out of her heart, and were flavored with pride, which, if sometimes bitter, is seldom salt. The man beside her waited, as he always did, to have his own way, and Isabel Seaton hopelessly yielded, as was her wont. She held up to him her list. "You can write what name you please." So he wrote with his pencil "Lucy Farewell" at the bottom. With these two people, according to Edward Vaughn's management, sunshine always followed a storm. Do you ask what happened, in that sunshine, to the tears

that still lingered in Isabel Seaton's beautiful eyes? They were kissed away.

When Edward Vaughn left the Seatons he went straight to St. Clement's parish school. There he found Lucy Farewell in the midst of a crowd of children, giving them a geography lesson. All the little folks stared back at the door as he stood there, and Lucy herself, with the slightest imaginable blush upon her cheeks, came down the aisle to ask the wishes of her novel visitor.

His manner was abrupt with her, for the morning's conversation had made him angry. "There is to be music at the Seatons' to-morrow evening, and you are invited. May I call for you and take you up?" and he looked down at her with two very sharp, incisive eyes. She hesitated, a trifle embarrassed. The whole thing struck her as singular, and unaccountable by any philosophy she possessed.

"Why do you ask me?" she said.

"Because it pleases me, and I wish it. Somebody must escort you, and I had as well do it as any one. I wish to call round for you and have you go with me. That is the only reason."

Lucy Farewell would rather not have gone with him, and she was inclined to say so. In fact, she did not like society, but Miss Mary was always urging her to it, and so, between her wish and her duty, she managed to speak a very undecided "Yes."

"So, then, this is where you exist," he said, looking round the schoolroom, whose appointments did not seem to please him.

"This is where I do my duty, Mr. Vaughn."

He looked down on her again with his sharp glance. In fact, he looked her all over before he said,

"Yes; I respect a woman who does her duty. I will call for you at half-past seven precisely," and, making his bow, he went away.

Edward Vaughn produced a decided sensation when he appeared at eight o'clock the next evening among the musical folks at the Seatons' with Lucy Farewell upon his arm. It was as good as a play to see the curious side-glances at the pair, and hear the not very flattering remarks that followed them as Edward Vaughn, with a sort of steady tramp, and with bows on all sides to the charming creatures whom he felt were disposed to criticise his companion after the fashion of female justice, passed through them to make his salutation to Miss Seaton, who, dressed in an ashes-of-roses colored silk, with some very elaborate point lace trimming (the superb creature she always was), had been nervously anxious for the last hour at his non-appearance. In contrast, Lucy Farewell was dressed in the plainest of black silks and a simple white collar about her throat, pinned together by a very small jet cross. When these two

ladies, so unlike, bowed to each other, it was, to the insight of even a man like Edward Vaughn, Art and Nature saluting each other. He made his bow, however, in a very emphatic manner, and with a puzzling air, as though he was not certain whether he wished to make himself agreeable or not. He was not in a very good humor, and Isabel Seaton knew it; so, between the two, some very commonplace things were said; and when Edward Vaughn, having led her to a seat, excused himself to make his tour of the rooms by himself, Lucy Farewell had become exceedingly uncomfortable. He found the young ladies everywhere gracious, if not to him, at least to the elegant establishment at River Nook, which was not him, yet his also; so he had soon great gain of smiles and bows from that tender sisterhood, which he pocketed as graciously and about as feelingly as he would his napoleons when he played for sport against the bank, and won money for which he had no special use. Men like him have a chronic distrust of almost everybody. It fared ill, however, with Lucy Farewell. She was not of the "set" that to-night inundated the Seatons' parlors, and, therefore, was allowed to occupy her seat in the alcove where Edward Vaughn had smoked so many cigars, unnoticed. It was surprising how many of the young ladies who promenaded past her were so short-sighted that they could not

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see to bow to her, and others, who had the grace to do so, seemed, if one may dissect so closely such charming creatures, to have back-bones without joints. In short, she was openly "cut" by her generous townswomen, and she soon discovered it; so also did Edward Vaughn, who, amongst the gay groups with whom he chatted, found time to watch his protégé, and very soon saw how she fared. He did not hurry himself, however, but went on with his small talk, while a peculiar smile, that deepened gradually to something like a frown, came to his almost handsome face. Yet the women he chatted with found him only a little more grave than usual, and very polite. After a half-hour or so, however, he found his way back to Lucy Farewell.

"Charming company, Miss Farewell. You must enjoy it hugely" (with a shrug of the shoulders).

She said nothing.

"You are not enthusiastic enough. So sociable these folks are, and well bred. I am surprised you don't go into raptures over it all. Isn't it delightful?"

She looked up into his face. It was very blank of any expression that she could understand; a broad, grave, and, as an adept could have told, a dangerous, sinister face, and with eyes looking straight at her.

"I cannot tell, sir, what you really think, but

you make me feel as though you did not mean what you say. I am very uncomfortable here."

"Bravo! how frank. I give you a lesson. In society, never say what you think. It is not expected of you, and would surprise people. Then they will call you odd; and honesty in the world shows like the very odd thing it is. You should say the company is charming."

"I do not think so, and therefore I cannot say so. Do you not think it is necessary for a lady to speak the truth?"

"Not at all; that is, as the world goes, — and you and I are in the world to-night."

"I do not like the world, then, and wish to keep out of it."

"You would make a charming hermit to live in a cave with the birds and squirrels up in Roaring Brook. Anywhere else, one must fib a little." She was on the point of answering some things very plainly, when he interrupted: "There, now, no more talk; Miss Seaton is going to sing."

Isabel Seaton, whom, in her cares as hostess, Edward Vaughn had found it easy to avoid this evening so far, had seated herself at the piano, turning over the music sheets, and was about to sing.

"A charming lady Miss Seaton is — magnificent. I am thinking of making her my wife. What sort of a spouse would she make me?"

"I don't know Miss Seaton. I dare say a very good one."

"What a cold speech to a lover like me! You should say she is angelic."

"But I don't know her, I tell you."

"No matter what you know, you should say so. People don't know most things they say. In fact, they say most when they know least. Look at her. What a magnificent figure, and that blonde curl over the shoulder so nicely rounded under the silk. I am very fond of blondes. I rave about her. If I marry her I shall take her abroad and have her presented at court. She would beat the world. And she, poor lady, is so innocent of my devotion."

Lucy Farewell looked at him again. Her instinct told her — that something in woman wiser than all logic, and more unerring — that the man beside her was somehow insincere. "I do not know Miss Seaton; but she is a woman, and you should not speak to me — a woman — in this way about her. If you thought of her as you say, you would not speak of her so to me, and you should not. I do not wish to listen to you. It is unjust to her, and I do not like it."

"You must be the Goddess of Justice, or something quite as grand. Now we must listen. The song comes now."

Isabel Seaton sung her song. There are a great

many kinds of singers. One is the wooden kind, who sing with the accuracy of a machine, and with as little emotion. One is the sentimental kind, who, without art, utter a great deal of sentiment in their notes, but have no culture; and of singers, as of the writing of books, there is no end. Isabel Seaton sang precisely and with a certain emotion. In fact, her nature expressed itself in song; but her song, like her nature, was southern, with the southern fire, and dreaminess, a trifle too sensuous, and with a tinge of something that is not bred among violets, nor in a woman who is a child. It was a song for masquerade, carnival, or wild dance in the late hours of revel, but not a strain to be ever sung by the cradle of blue-eyed infants nor at a bride's banquet. Yet it was very proper Italian music, and was rendered cleverly.

Edward Vaughn waited till the song was through, and then said to the woman beside him: "As you do not allow me to compliment Miss Seaton, you will excuse me from criticising her music; and as it is very warm here, if you like let us take a stroll outdoors and look at the stars, for a change."

"I shall be glad to go, sir."

So they went out into the hall. "The ground is damp. Have you thick shoes on? I am old foggy enough to have women take care of their health. You had better take your shawl." So, when he had helped her to her shawl and taken a

general inspection of her fitness to go into the night air, they went out together. "Stop a minute," he said, as they went down the walk towards the gate. "This is a great change from indoors. Your shawl is not close enough about your throat. I don't intend you to catch consumption walking with me. Allow me," and he arranged the shawl about her throat, while she pinned it there; for Edward Vaughn *could* be as gentle as a woman. As he did so, a tear actually fell upon his hand.

He started. "How is this, my child? You are weeping. What is the matter?"

"Nothing. I am only very foolish, and ought to have more restraint. But I have really been very unhappy indoors, and it is such a relief to get out into the free air once more."

Edward Vaughn knew very well what the matter was, but he did not choose to say so. "Never mind," he said; "here you are, out in the air with me. I will take good care of you; and just look what a night! All the stars are abroad, and nobody will molest us here."

So they walked down to the gate together, and she leaned on a strong arm until she became tranquil. Edward Vaughn himself was very quiet, and, for a wonder, said nothing grotesque or sarcastic. It might have been the silence of the night or of the woman with him—he was at least quiet. Yet he said, as they came to

the gate and stopped there a moment before they turned back, "One of the first things my mother ever taught me was to look at the stars, and how they were great worlds; and often on shipboard or travelling at night, and especially in the tropics, where they are so bright, I have thought of the times when she taught me my prayers at my bed-side. You women can do great things with this human race. You should be always our teachers."

Was it the childlike nature beside him that was leading him back to his own childhood and its better thoughts? Who knows? Yet is it not writ of the proud human creatures who think to rule a world, "And a little child shall lead them"?

So they walked back to the house.

"You had better say, if asked, that we have been on the piazza. Folks are so inquisitive, and it is nobody's business where we have been," he said, as they were about to go in.

"I cannot say that. It is not true."

"What will you say, then?"

"Say the truth, that I have been out walking with you."

"But I wish it. I like to confuse people."

"I cannot oblige you. Perhaps it is not the common way, but I must tell you once for all that I can never oblige you by saying even in a small matter what is not true."

"Suppose I am angry at you."

"I cannot help it then."

"What an innocent lamb you are. The wolves will devour you if you go on in that way. Let us go in to them." Sure enough the first person they met on entering was Isabel Seaton. "I have been looking for you," she said. "Pray, where have you been?" Edward Vaughn said nothing, but his companion answered, "We have taken a walk down to the gate, Miss Seaton," and the man assumed his stolid, unreadable look, and gazed at nothing but straight before him and over Isabel Seaton's head.

During the course of the evening, when he had left Lucy Farewell once more in her niche by the window, where nobody seemed to see her, he found himself *tête-à-tête* with Miss Seaton.

"You have deserted me this evening, Edward."

"Have I?"

"Yes, and I know from your manner that something has gone wrong. What is it?"

"How sharp-eyed you are! I am in excellent health and spirits. There is nothing the matter," and his face became very grave and blank.

"Yes; it is something. Have I done anything to offend you?"

"You? What could you do? Why don't you ask Miss Farewell to sing?"

"Ah, that is the trouble. I will ask her."

“Well, there she is in the alcove yonder. Suppose we go now and do it.” So they two went where Lucy Farewell was sitting, and Miss Isabel, in her blindest manner, asked her to sing. It was not Lucy Farewell’s wish to sing, and she said so, but Edward Vaughn put an end to the dispute by saying, “Don’t be like other folks, but sing when you are asked. Miss Belle wishes it, and so do I.” So as the easiest way she consented to sing, and Mr. Vaughn led her to the piano.

It would profit nobody to count the pretty shoulders that shrugged themselves when Lucy Farewell began to sing. Yet she sang notwithstanding. It was a song that had had a great run in its day, and like all popular songs it had the elements of great things in it. It was a song which connected itself with a great struggle between Eastern and Western Christendom, and its words and spirit were English. In it was the pathos of free men, who had given up their beloved, to die in war grapple with Russian serfs; the pain and ache of frozen men in the winter trenches, and the regret of dying men in bleak hospitals; over all rose the stormy strains of that warrior race, hungering for battle, which under all suns fights out on the red field its victory with the soul of heroes. It was a song not applauded when Lucy ended, but its music was that which rouses men to great thoughts. One could not

have told from Edward Vaughn's face what he thought of it, but as he bent over the singer he said, "That was well done." The company turned to their talk again. It was true that Lucy Farewell had sung her part well, and also that the music was greater than she. For music is of no clime or nation, but a universal tongue understood by hearts of every blood. We talk English, French, or German, as we were born, but music is a more catholic language, with no such narrow limits. It is this quality of music which teaches us perhaps a great truth concerning the Hereafter. It *may be* the vernacular of heaven. If so, we shall speak with our beloved forever in music.

There was nothing further remarkable in Isabel Seaton's musical party. Edward Vaughn became more gracious to her after Lucy Farewell sang. In due time he also took that lady home.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WEDDING IN BLACKBERRY HOLLOW.

EDWARD VAUGHN, since his advent here, had made much of Aubrey vagabonds and poor folk. Polite tongues are wont to call these the sediment, and nautical ones the wreckage, of society. However named, they were evidently at the bottom of the pool and well broken up in the tide, so boisterous and sure, which sweeps us all on and away. He had done this by spasmodic outbreaks of money-giving and a general habit of making talk with them wherever he met them. They understood the money part and were too serene philosophers to ask a reason for any such unusual behavior. Besides, there was something in his blunt, sturdy ways that pleased them. Rough lives, at least in everyday matters, find a certain dissonance in soft words. He had already gained a certain standing in their strata of being. For human society may be as truly exclusive from below as from above. So far as he went, he did this, not as the great Shining One had, so long ago, at the Bethesda porches or the white strands of Galilee, with the lame and impotent folk, to

shew mercy on them, but in the lawless outbreak of a restless nature, self-foiled and self-avenging, with quaint, and on the surface unaccountable, behaviors. As he stood just now, in actual assets and by any honest law of virtue he was their kinsman in the same tide, if at a higher altitude. With the brighter of them he bandied words and laughed at their sordid jokes, but he gave the others less monies.

"Granny Little" was one of his favorites. What her Christian name might be was sure some day to puzzle the doctor, or the undertaker who was like to follow him so closely at her last illness, to discover; but everybody knew her for "Granny Little." The two root-facts of her story, as known to Aubrey, were that she was an Irish immigrant and a trooper's widow. Of course other things came on the surface, as some knew to their cost, to wit, that her tongue was long and sharp and her temper that of a person in a perpetual campaign. She usually showed in public as a little wizened, wiry woman with no feminine uncertainty of age, dressed in dilapidated brogans several sizes beyond her measure, a gray woollen gown quite too short to ever suggest a train, and a huge, yellowish-white cap with vagrant frills that suggested horns in front; under which, eyes that might once have been a trifle blue, and a medley of colors culminating in vermilion at a

dropsical nose tip over a mouth vacant of anything that dentistry could do or save, and towards which a protruded chin seemed always trying to climb up, fashioned a face which might best remind the ungodly of the Queen of Clubs in a colic. "Granny's" vocation ran to several things; and, as has been said, she made life a sort of running fight with her needs. She was first of all a polyglot and catholic beggar; that is, she begged anything of everybody who would stand and deliver; and woe, in her prayers and in her summing up of character, to those who never gave. For Granny had a religion, not of that Roman kind which was vaster than her pate or heart; but of the Roman kind so far as it had power to enter upon the stony and rather scant soil of her own nature. It was reported by her neighbors that the day when she had behaved most naughty she always went to mass. Sooth to say, if this were strictly true, she must have been a daily devotee. Only at mass she was sure to kneel longest at the altar-rail saying her prayers, with swingings back and forth and spyings out of the congregation between her pinches of almost perpetual snuff, until the pastor warned her of the scandal, and for a week or so she became in tongue and temper a very Protestant. Yet she kept the Virgin and a calendar of saints upon her tongue's tip for any one who would give her some cold victuals.

Granny lived under the hill and kept two goats. Her shanty was a bit of vague architecture, loose among a medley of Irish houses, where there were no streets and a deal of squatter sovereignty. It was an event to see Granny going out with these goats to pasture whenever a stray tuft of grass by the river side, or any other patch of verdure that Providence might order, offered. At such times she marched with a military air, as if scenting the battle; for the Grubtown urchins (for so was Granny's hamlet nominated) had a spite at the goats, who were also given to war, as many of the aforesaid urchins had learned to their cost, in the dirt where these brutes had butted them, and at every chance they pelted their horned adversaries with stones. There was sure to be hot work round Granny's cabin at times, when all was quiet inside and she was supposed to be at her noon nap, and these boys were not. Then a stray stone, intended for the goats, but rattling against the resounding house sides, made it worse for wayfarers than digging honeycombs out of a rotten stump in August; for Granny swarmed out into all quarters while the urchins hid, and the tide of her tongue flowed on until the neighbors shut all the windows. At such times there was wanting incense to purify the air?

A few days after the events told in our last chapter, Edward Vaughn, on his trip to the vil-

lage, met Granny seated by the roadside with her goats. "Well, Granny, how goes it?" But Granny to-day was in one of her tearful moods, into which she fell whenever she had been particularly naughty or was meditating some unusual draft on somebody's pocket. At such times she was much given to frequent up-passes of her grimy right hand, at an angle of some forty-five degrees over her red nose tip and left eyebrow, in among her cap frills, as if brushing away hairs, and her voice became a sort of chronic snivel, meant to vocalize her otherwise hidden sorrow. So, when Mr. Vaughn addressed her his cheerful question, she went through her usual pantomime, prefacing it with a tug at her sere cap-strings, gone astray under her left ear, and a down-snatch at her brief gown, in the impossible endeavor to bring it in closer neighborhood with her brogans, all in the way of female vanity, and said nothing.

"Well, what the dogs ails you now, Granny? Turned out for rent, or put out of church for taking your morning bath in holy water?"

Only a series of dry sighs, with an asthmatic timbre to them, answered the inquiry.

"Oh, I see; you are going to die shortly. If that's all, I tell you we'll give you the biggest wake in town—plenty of pipes and whiskey, with lots of candles,—and ten to one you'll enjoy it all the same as though it was Polly Maguire" (her

next neighbor and farthest friend) "in the coffin instead of you. Cheer up, then, woman, and make your best face at it, if that is all."

Even this promise, so full of hope, failed for some moments to check Granny's snivel and the attendant pantomime of grief; but at last she managed to blurt out in what was meant to look like a supreme effort to master her emotions, "Ochone, it's the weddin' that's killed me intire."

"A wedding? Somebody run away with your sweetheart, and you lone and lorn in the highway, with two goats for comfort? Shame on you for no good. Go to the wedding, and, behind the bride's back, weep in that eloquent way of yours for her luck."

"Bad luck to the likes of ye," says Granny, stiffening up, and losing for the nonce her temper (a state of mind she emphasized by flinging a stone, hid in her hand, at one of the goats, which had slipped its tether); "bad luck to your honor (softening down her asperity to the humility of those beggars who expect); "does ye think I'm a fool? Men has been the plague of me life, and if St. Pathrick axed me, I'd bid him nay for his answer."

"Well, what, then, *is* the matter?"

Her tongue once found, the fact was easy to tell:

"Everybody is invited to the weddin', and I've nothin' to clad meself in for the frolic."

"Oh, well, if that's all, Granny, come with me to the store, and we'll fix you out all right." It was fun to mark the alacrity with which at this announcement Granny managed to get on her feet, and, with a very shower of curtseys and the invocation of several saints, to acquit herself of her overflowing gratitude. At such times of thanksgiving there was only one way to stop the outburst, to wit, to begin one's self to chant in one's most solemn tone some Latin (it might be the preface to Cornelius Nepos or any other) plentifully interlarded with "*Per sæcula sæculorum*" and "*Amens*," all in ritual fashion, from which, as an unknown and potent incantation, Granny always retreated and vanished into distance with curtseys, and it was thought with counter prayers to the Virgin for her sweet protection. But as Mr. Vaughn did not happen to know this secret, he could only let Granny conclude and gather her goats for the town. This done, and the conversation continued by the way.

"Fine goats these of yours, Granny."

"Och, darlin', thim's me comfort and me pace of mind intirely. Whin I'm vexed, and me neighbors throuble me, I milk me goats. They's never swears at me, nor axes me for rint, nor goes roaming about like me neighbors' dogs o' nights, and

are the paceablest saints in the town. Och, goats is a comfort to a poor woman's fireside, and the illigantest cratures on airth."

"No doubt, Granny, and what do you call these illigant cratures?"

"That's Tim, and that's Peggy. Tim's older nor two years than she."

"Well, you haven't paid much respect to gender in naming your goats anyhow, Granny."

"Ginder! ginder! what's that?"

"I mean that both your goats give milk, and you have named one of them 'Tim.'"

"Oh, that's what you mane by 'ginder.' Thin I do pay respect to ginder. Thin goats' names are for me babes, God rist their sowl."

"I never knew you had any children, Granny."

"Maybe not, but I had, plase God, two babes. Tim was me first, and had me man's name; both died with cholera in garrison. I disremember the name on the sea, — Charnel or Channel, I think they called it, somewhere; and Tim jist like me man; and Peggy — ochone, the blissest babe, with eyes as blue as hiven — both took and me lone. So I *has* respect to 'ginder,' and I sez, I'll name me goats Tim and Peggy, and many's the saison when I calls me goats out of the grass that I prays the Vargin that the grass may be grane where they sleeps."

"So you were married to a soldier, Granny?"

“Faith, it’s yis I was, and in church, too, honey, and me man was as straight and trim as the best that carried musket. And I follered him long-shore and inshore until they took us women and shut us up in Walmer Castle — ochone, don’t I know the cussed hold, — and they sent my man over sea to some sort of loo — Peterloo or Watterloo, where the inemy was, to fite folks they had never seen. And my man he never come back; and what was it to me whin his rigiment was home, and colors and drums, and they said it was a great victory. But it kilt him, and the babes were gone. Git along, Tim;” and Granny threw a chip at that vagrant climbing the bank for a tuft of clover.

“Well, well, Granny, all of us wear a shoe that pinches somewhere. The wedding will set you all right. Yonder is the store, and that will comfort you. And Granny hurried on the goats, and hitched them to the pump outside, while the two went indoors. The proprietor, a brisk bustling trader with sandy hair, who kept on sale a little of everything except the virtues, listened very readily to Mr. Vaughn’s orders. “Here, Mr. Messinger,” said the latter, “give Granny Little everything she wants for an outfit for the wedding in Blackberry Hollow, and send the bill to me.”

“Certainly,” said the shopman. Then Mr. Vaughn left, while Granny graced his departure by

innumerable curtseys and a more than ordinary powerful invocation of the saints for his blessing. But with his disappearance went her civilities as well. The shopkeeper, now in her hands, was known, but not dear, to her, and in matters of trade she had never before known such liberties or such riches. She seemed to grow a head taller all at once, as her militant air broadened over her whole person, and with arms akimbo and incisive eyes from under the gray lashes, first surveyed the store in general, and finally halted at the storekeeper.

“What can I do for you, Granny?” said that person in his usual shop style.

“Oh, it’s for me yees ’ll be doing, is it? Will, thin, wait a thrifle, and I’ll be giving yees the satisfaction.” So she reviewed the store again, and then came close to the counter, and bent over to the shopman’s ear to astound him with her hoarse but solemn question, “Hev yees any rum?” Now, in the mind of most persons rum has at the best or worst only a very remote relation to a wedding, and Granny’s question certainly took the man aback.

“You don’t want rum for a wedding, Granny,” he expostulated.

“What’s a wake or a widding without rum, ye Prisbytarian sapleen. Yees might just as well ate yer dinner without first fire to cook it as bury or

marry a dacent person without a thrifle to drink. So give me me rum and be going afther it as quick as if yees was going to your wife's funeral."

Granny was known to be weak with rum, so the man finally said, after a vain attempt to put her off and to save himself from a drunken woman at his door, "Well, Granny, here are some bitters, just the thing," and he handed her one of those mysterious bottles of a popular patent cough medicine which was never known to cure, and would have confounded a whole college of chemists to analyze.

"Will they bite hard," said Granny doubtfully, with an up-squint of her left eye at the trader.

"Never fear that, Granny, they'll bite down to your toes, and if you take too much you'll think a herd of snakes is after you."

"Thim's the jewels, then," said Granny (for such folk like strong effects, even in their diet), and taking the bottle with its label illuminated by a catalogue of all its virtues on the outside, where they only were, she thrust it deep into the capacious storehouse of the one pocket of the woollen dress, and looked round for more. Her eyes happened to fall on the fine stores of sardines and olives. Of these she had never tasted, but she had seen others do so at the picnics where she was washing dishes. So she said, "Give me

some of thim little fishes and thim grane apples in ile that yees got on the shelf there."

"Oh, you mean the sardines and olives, do you?"

"I mane *thim*," pointing with her fist, "and give 'em me quick and don't be foolin'."

"But what in the world have they to do with your going to the wedding?"

"Plinty, plinty, you big Prisbytarian, vexin' me there behind yer counter. Can't I rade me Bible as well as yer brother and know me Chater-casm? and it's meself that knows that me stomach is kilt intirely this blessed day with fastin'; and how'll I go to the weddin' whin I'm only fit for the wake? the saints defin'd us. Ye'll murder me if ye don't hurry, and me faintin' here like a ha-then." So the sardines and olives went into the same capacious pocket. Then Granny turned to the dry goods. If her deserts had been as vast as the outfit she coveted she would have been a paragon. The trader was ready to sell under Mr. Vaughn's elastic order, but some of Granny's needs seemed so remote from the occasion that even he often stumbled over her requests. The struggle ended finally by Granny's carrying off a curious booty of ribbons of every shade of the rainbow (though green predominated), and such wear as was fit for no special season known to woman, nor for any mortal except herself. An immense hoop

skirt, too elaborate for her pocket, was put on over her dress at once, and a huge red woollen shawl, also worn, completed the outfit.

Even then she was hardly satisfied. Her last demand quite stupefied the shopman. "Have yees any incense about ye, darlin'?" asked Granny, whose temper had gradually softened under her increasing riches. "Have yees any incense?"

"Incense?" said the man, "do you take me for a priest?"

"Och, divil's the praste ye'll be, and it's lucky the day ye'll get out of purgatory for yer sins in sellin' bad tay and shugar with sand and harbs and what not to them, for Christans like me to sup. Hev yees any incense, I axes ye?"

"No," said the man bluntly, "I haven't, and don't want any."

"But how'll I go to the widdin' and not a taste of somethin' to make me smell fine, and give an illigant touch to me appearance? His riverince towld us last Sunday morn that incense is the breath of saints, and how'll I go to the widdin' and me not carrying the blissing wid me?"

"Well, all I've got is some Cologne, if that will do you," said the shopkeeper. "I've got some first rate in those bottles there."

"Well," said Granny, meditatively; "it's a Protestant weddin', anyhow, and maybe it's all the

same to thim, so I don't mind if yees'll give me the Kerlone." So she took the long-necked bottle of Cologne, made by an enterprising Yankee up the river, and this in hand (for the pocket refused further duty) went for her goats. The processional to Grubtown that followed was not soon forgot by those who saw it, but Granny was too intent and rich to mind the jeers and rambling salutes of the bystanders, and when she came to the Grubtown lane she halted to let the goats browse a trifle while she tried to sit down under the one oak tree that kept guard and shade over that unique spot. In her laden condition, sitting down was only easier than getting up again; but once down she also proceeded to browse in a very guarded way upon what she had in hand. First she examined critically the bottle of Cologne, but as she could not read, the legend on it might be a prayer or a curse for all she knew, and she proceeded to possess the olives. Now, to some persons their first olive tastes very much as the bilge water in a ship's hold smells; and Granny's first eager bite of that fruit set all the wrinkles of her face into strange contortions. Then she nibbled more daintily at it a moment, until her disgust grew to an absolute grin of abhorrence. But it was only when she managed to get herself on her feet again that she found her voice. "O the chate in the store beyant; may the divil broil his bones

for givin' me the cholera, shure. I niver ate such fruit since iver I was a Christan. There's not a pig in Grubtown nor would ate the same; nor a rat, sure. It's thim Protestants may ate the same and grow fat for all I'll care a pistareen, bad luck to the heritics."

So Granny found her way home, and tethering her goats to the water-spout of her shanty, under which the washtub of rain-water served for their pool of refreshment, she set to work to undo the malice of her first olive with "the bitters." These she uncorked by the aid of a rusty fork and sniffed at the contents. "It smells like inyons," was her comment (and a syrup of onions did form its basis). "Inyons is healthy, anyhow." So she drank first cautiously and then with her usual energy at the concoction. It certainly did bite, as the storekeeper told, long after Granny rested. It was a liquid beyond honest alcohol in vileness, so like others in human use which demand of all who will survive them stomachs of sheet iron. After her draught, Granny proceeded to her millinery for the coming bridals. Her success, like that of many others of her like-minded sisters, will probably appear at the wedding.

Meanwhile, and all day long, the wedding was waxing warm in Blackberry Hollow. In this ardor the good folk there were neither amiss or singular, if their engagements were to be gauged

by what goes on among polite folk everywhere. The two great events in the theatre of a life like theirs are a wedding and a funeral; so kindly does the order of human life provide both a comic and a tragic stage for all mortals. Their opera, perhaps, is the singing at a funeral, the comedy whereof is usually the tune. For Blackberry Hollow, as the name shows, was a quiet spot among the hills, and very much in the form of a punchbowl, with its sides reft east and west by the ravine through which flowed the trout stream and the ragged road that led by the sawmill into such a world as the Hollow folk chose to find or make. It was in old time the farm of an English immigrant, who settled there to serve God and get domain in the wild; but as time sped it had been divided again and again among the generations, some of whom were now living in the little white or black houses scattered loosely along the lanes, and nearly everybody was cousin to the rest. The poor whites and the colored folk were not, however; but as they were needed in harvest or wood cutting, winters, and sat at meal time at table with their masters, there were few social bickerings or jealousies. Such as there were, however, were over very minute points, and then the settlement was sure to be very late, since rustic conservatism settles even a quarrel slowly.

It was Farmer Jones' daughter who was marry-

ing this time; and as he owned most land and paid most wage-money of any hereabouts this was an event to rouse the Hollow. So all day long, at intervals, the creaky farm wagons with poky nags and generally three earnest women in each seat, unloaded at Farmer Jones' door the cousins and the aunts who came from across the hills to assist at the ceremony. Farmer Jones' house itself was a curiosity. It had, so to speak, run wild under the hands of its diverse owners, who had tacked on here and there a room, as their quiver became full of children or the old folk withdrew themselves into their corner away from the clatter of new nurseries, until at present it looked like a house trying to run away from itself at every point of the compass. The big black barn behind, stuffed full of winter fodder, seemed to be always trying to get into the house, and its yard, with its litter of old wheels and the carcasses of bygone wagons, was always creeping up to the back door, whence the housewife's broom could keep it only a few paces off. It was a home as homes go in this world, with its good points, but it did not suggest or invoke the Muses.

Indoors, and until late afternoon, the wedding fervor was spending itself in such bakings and brewings as furnished not exactly food and nectar for the gods, but such mundane meats and drinks

as befitted the stout stomachs of the Hollow folk at a revel. It was to be noted on this occasion that the married women went straight at their work with much vivacity and clatter of tongues, while the younger maidens, with less in hand, went wandering through the rooms or stumbling into the way of the workers, as if in a maze or reverie over the grand occasion, and adorned the festival with white dresses and incessant blushes. The men folk were, for the most part, to be noted for their absence, except the two colored men who did "chores" and waited on the women. The rest were hid somewhere behind the barn or hay ricks, ruminating their part in the play. Their final toilet, to be made in odd rooms under the rafters, with a preliminary wash in the brook, was as vagabond and wild as the patches of scrub thickets scattered over the slopes of their Hollow. So, when the lights were lit till the old house blazed out in an unwonted brilliancy, and the parson drove up in his chaise, it was a motley company which filled the long, rambling, best room, with a smell about it as of mouldy apples, and received him with the courtesy of a silence which could be felt, at least by the younger maids and boys. So, too, when the bride and groom came down from some upper lodgment to "stand up," as the phrase runs, for the marriage formula, it was to be noted that the bride, who was not homely, had more self-

possession than the stalwart but gawky groom, and gave plain answers, when he only mumbled out a medley. So, too, when the brief service ended which might be the preface to many and weary years of their new estate, and the couple, with the good wishes of the minister, stood back in one corner to be kissed and crooned over by all who could claim relationship, the company fell into its old silence as it ranged itself round the room sides in convenient chairs, each apparently fallen into deep meditation again, as if they had lost something and were trying to find it, and not a few wrestling with the problem of their two hands, as to whether they were theirs indeed; and if so, whether any rest was to be found for them in this world, at least at a wedding. But when the parson, who had tried in vain to lift the silence with a few semi-pleasantries, left the solemnity, the spirits of all instantly and curiously revived. The sound of his departing chariot wheels was the call to the real wedding — “the second part,” as they are wont to call it, where the last wine is better than the first. A certain slight movement of the mass went on to deepen towards the kitchen, whose doors were now opened, and the company found their feet and their tongues together. Then what chatter and Babel, while the long tables, with frosted cakes and meats, and great bowls of blackberry wine, for which the house was

famous, among the smoky lamps, displayed themselves to the hungry throng which beset them. Then the reserve guard of the wedding, the farm men, deployed themselves from outside and indoors, where they had waited for the feast, and the whites of the eyes of the negroes with fiddles were seen in the gloom of the doorway leading to the barn. Then followed that great appeal to stomachs, which has such rare persuasion for human kind, and the rollick and the fun ran here into rough joke and jostle among the elders and whenever an ancient maiden purloined by covert, or had valor to take openly, a piece of bride cake to dream upon; and became pianissimo when some swain offered his blushing sweetheart a glass of wine, or tried at the same time to say some soft things and keep her neighbor's elbows from transfixing her well-starched muslins—and her own loveliness to boot. The roots of a wedding frolic in hovel or palace are one; only the leaves differ.

Granny Little was not one of the folks who came late. Her mental perturbations over her new riches from the grocery had neither held her back from a meal of sardines in early afternoon, nor snatched from her the shrewd guess that there would be much to eat at the wedding. Accordingly she bade good day to the goats tethered at her washtubs, and had gone quite early. Of course, she had gone at once to the kitchen, as the

place for the likes of her, and the natural home of that bountiful platter out of which she hoped to be fed. Her advent to the kitchen, for reasons which will appear presently, had quite astonished the good housewives there, and her supercilious and quite "arms-akimbo" air, bred from her new riches, at the first blush gave alarm as well as offence to the busy workers. But their good sense and nature had soon consigned her, with her own consent, to the oak settle behind the big stove, in the recesses of the huge fireplace, with her back to the brick oven, where she watched events or dozed at intervals, and where her bones were sure to be well warmed, as such folk like, and from whence it was easy access to the tables.

During the parson's wedding prayer she had vigorously crossed herself to drive off the fumes of heresy; and when the feasting began she had managed to possess a full loaf of frosted cake, and the huge tin dipper on the stove hearth helped her to the wine. Apparently, therefore, she was now happy as a queen.

Edward Vaughn also went, with John Walker for a guide, to the wedding. There is apparent in most of us, if we watch carefully enough, a series of subtle instincts which connect themselves with prehistoric ages, when men dwelt in caves and herded in more democratic fashions than prevail at present. Hence is derived

a child's passion for cubbyholes and hiding-places under the eaves of country houses, and for the smell of kine and hay in barns; and, indeed, the liking of some grown folks for cosy nooks and corners. It might have come from some such secret fountain that Edward Vaughn, whose social standing was so diverse, found a real pleasure in the society of such folks as those in Blackberry Hollow. The German hut, with the cattle round it, which was before the castle or burgher's mansion, after all the changes of his ancestry, might have still been in his blood, urging him on to what was at best but a rustic wedding. At any rate, he went with good zest, and was prepared to be merry. When he came in at the back-door of the aforesaid kitchen, which opened every way, curiously enough, his sense of smell was greeted by an overmastering scent of Cologne, and the feast was at its height. The bluff, hearty, red-faced farmer gave him a warm welcome with, "Well, squire, I didn't expect to see you here to-night, but it's all the same anyhow. Make yourself at home."

"With your help, that I will," was answered, "and to show I mean it, and as I thought you would have everything else in plenty, my man has brought over a lot of smoking tobacco to assist the good company. I had no tracts to bring, and perhaps the tobacco, anyhow, is better."

"Tobacco is in order almost any time in these parts, squire, and after the boys are done we'll all take a whiff in the wash-room. Mayn't we, Ma?" addressing his bustling spouse.

"Yes, Pa; you may smoke right here if you want; anywhere to take off this dreadful smell," pointing to the chimney corner.

"O, it's Granny smells so," said several voices, in explanation. Then from the depths before the oven door came forth a voice and an apparition. The voice said, "Bad luck to the likes of ye, to be turning up yer noses at the Kerlone! May ye never have a candle at the wake of one of ye." Then Granny emerged into the light, bolt upright before them all, and Edward Vaughn could only wonder. An immense coal-scuttle bonnet of rusty yellow straw, decked out with flaunting ribbons of all the colors of the rainbow, which fell all ways towards her feet, covered, if they did not conceal, her head; a huge, red, woollen shawl, thick enough for any thermometer, registering its lowest possible, garnished her shoulders; while below — thanks to the hoop skirts — she looked like a truncated beer barrel far gone in a dropsy, yet standing on its own rim in an impudent bravado against the field. A vision of such peculiar beauty was greeted with a general laugh.

"Ye, may laugh and laugh till ye breaks yer bones, but where's the one of ye, fit to hold a farthin' candle to meself that is."

"There, there, Granny," interposed Mr. Vaughn against her wrath, "be quiet now, and don't make a disturbance."

"Disterbance is it, honey?" said Granny, quieting down into her finery; "and it's yees that have brought the 'baccy,' but where is the *pipes*?"

"Be quiet, I say. You've no doubt got a half-dozen in your pocket now, and black at that."

"If I had me ould gown wid me, maybe I have, but divil a pocket is on me now, and how'll I smoke an ould pipe at a wake or weddin', honey?"

So, to quell her ancient Irishry, some one found her a bran new pipe, with which she retreated to her corner, and there, what with her frequent lavings of Cologne, which she had brought in the original bottle tied to her waist, and a vigorous use of the Virginia weed, she created an atmosphere so overwhelming that several doors were speedily opened, and nothing but the fear of an Irish scrimmage prevented some of the younger from trying to drive her from her nest.

All weddings, like the tides, have seasons when they flow or ebb, and their high-water mark is a dance. So after supper the wedding rose to a dance, and Sally Nally — a wizened, sallow woman with very coarse black hair and a glib tongue, very frequent at funerals, and like some parsons very "happy" there, where her long and stolid face, without a shade of sympathy in it, reminded

one of the hired mourners of an Egyptian village, —was floor manager. Now a dance is supposed to be pastime, but a great deal of labor went into this one, from the two negroes who sawed and sweated over their fiddles up to the dancer who turned the wrong partner or trod upon her toes in the more ecstatic mazes and the maid who missed her figure or her vagrant hair-pin just when she would have looked bewitching, or fell into retreat with a dishevelled flounce, while the dance went on. Sturdy work there was to take the floor or leave it, but their whole world was looking on, and so with a supreme self-consciousness they fared on as stoutly as they could, until vigor cloaked awkwardness with a robe of public satisfaction. Like many another and more urbane company, this one, while it brought nothing great to pass, greatly admired itself, which is all the great world can ask. But Granny Little, who for some time had been watching the dancers from the kitchen wood-box, gave *her* opinion. “Thim’s rather slim doings in there,” she said. “If only yee’d see an Irish jig, me darlins.” So, in a pause, some of the young fellows tempted her on to show them how it was. So there upon the kitchen floor, with two fiddles, Granny danced her one jig. What with the ribbons and her other finery, not to mention her brogans, there had been seldom dance like it seen upon this poor footstool, and it

was well that the floor was oak. The applause that followed was very hearty — of its kind.

It was just after the episode of Granny's jig that every one heard the sound of a violin outdoors and down the road. If it was not a serenade, it was certainly a surprise, as the faces of all showed. Besides, the music was coming nearer, and as they listened, it seemed to reach the elm by the gate and halt. Then it began again, and played a strange medley, and yet without a note of wedding joy in it. As Edward Vaughn, who was an adept in music, remembered it in after years, it was a weird fantasia, broken and spray-like as to its parts, and yet with the thread of a theme running through it so that these parts cohered. Yet the theme wandered as if bred from an unsteady mind, and the spasms of its passion were abrupt and vagrant. It sounded, as indeed it was, like the meditations of a mind which saw through a rift of storm cloud but yet grasped fiercely at the intended melodies. It was neither wail, dirge, anthem, command, or proclamation, but these and more in one, and the fire of it was lurid and of the color of blood, no stars nor flowers whatever. It was indeed, not to exaggerate, music of that nature which might fitly precede the judgment of a world. Only the music was that of those who awaited sentence.

The party inside soon solved the mystery. "Oh,

that's Old Red Beard," said one; and the word went round that Old Red Beard with his fiddle was in the yard outside. "Bring him in and give him some wedding cake," said one. "Better let him alone," said a dozen others; "he's tarnation stubborn when his fit is on him, and to meddle would make him worse. Let him play it out." So the music went on.

"Who is this man?" asked Mr. Vaughn of Farmer Jones.

"Oh, wall, he's a curious feller that works round here hayin' and choppin', and lives in a little hut by the big rock above 'the Well.' I can't say 'zackly who he is, nor much less what he is."

"Is he crazy?"

"Wall, there, Squire, you have me agin: p'r'aps he is and p'r'aps he isn't; he's mixed up somehow, he's giggery. He's well enough at times; no man does a better day's work; don't need no watchin'; but he never eats with nobody and always goes with hisself. He's tarnation strong too, you bet. I've seed him fling a feller that tried to steal his fiddle clean over the bush into the river as tho' he'd been a cornstalk, and the boys give him a wide berth every time. Yet I never had no trouble with him, and he takes his pay as quiet as a lamb, and never finds fault with my reckoning. The only bad thing I know

of him is that he hates the wimmen folks. Why, he'll get over the fence and go 'crosslots any day rather nor meet a petticoat; and when some young rascals hung an old gown on the bars that go down to his spring, they do say he took his rifle and riddled it with bullets, and he's gone ever since another way to water. I have hearn tell that there was a young woman in the case,—a great many young women get into such cases, I guess; and when folks round here don't know what else to say of a queer feller they call him 'lovesick.' But I reckon more dies of measles than of love, at least in Blackberry Holler. He's tarnation religious, too — 'Adventer,' or some such name they call him, allus preaching Judgment Day is comin' before snow falls; and I wish it *wor* come for the fellers that steal my melons, Fall times. And they *due* say that about once a month he builds a fire on the big rock behind his house, just for fun, I s'pose, or p'r'aps he 'spects to go up in a chariat of fire, as Ichabod or some other old feller did. No! I don't hardly think no man can find Old Red Beard out. Leastaways, I can't."

"If we should go and ask him in, would he make trouble?"

"No — but he wouldn't come, I reckon. This house is full of wimmin folks, and he knows it; and what in the name of Jack Robinson he's come round here for, beats me."

“We might go out and see him, anyhow. He won’t bite unless somebody strikes.” So Farmer Jones and Edward Vaughn went out and down towards the gate. Under the big elm over it, a man stood playing on a fiddle, with his head laid close to it as if listening; and when they came up Vaughn saw that head covered with long ringlets, which in the moonlight showed not red but of dark gold which seemed on the point of breaking into flame. The beard was also — rare hair of that color and energy, so to speak, which the Germans prized so highly even before the days of the first Cæsar. They came close before they disturbed him at his music. But then slowly he lifted himself till the violin went behind his back and he stood straight and stark in the night air, six feet and more, lithe but slight — all except the chest and shoulders — as an ash.

“Much obleeged for that ere music, Red Beard,” said the farmer, “but ye’d better walk in and take sumthin’ — some cake, now, and a sip of the old woman’s wine, Red Beard.”

“There are two of you,” said the man, not noticing the proffered hospitality. “Who is the other?”

“Oh, that’s my friend, Squire Vaughn, who lives over at River Nook.”

“I have never seen that man,” answered the other in the impersonal tone of one whose mind

was far away. "I wish to see him." So he came close to where Edward Vaughn stood, and stooping a little looked at him. Vaughn remembered that look and face to his life's end—not a sharp look, and yet one that seemed to creep in under the surface to the bone and marrow of a man with a great solemn plea and inquest,—and yet the eyes wandered restlessly beyond and over him; and a face worn rather than wasted, with the color of red blood still in the cheeks, and the firm mouth of a man who would be hard, in mortal strife, to break. He wore no hat, but a huge red muffler about his throat, and looked a man of forty, though the town records would probably show him younger.

"Yes," he went on in his rapt, impersonal fashion, with a musical cadence of far away, as if some one out of cloudland were talking to the stars. "It is coming soon, and the powers of the air shall be shaken. I heard them whispering at the Well this very night, and the leaves trembled at what they said. Yes; and the Great White Throne is coming, and the fire will make clean the wheat. Yes,"—and the chant of his voice grew low and tremulous in sweetness, as of one who already tasted a certain delicious joy,—“and then the saints shall find their white robes and no man shall sin nor weep.”

"Well, well," said the good-natured common-

sense farmer, who was himself awed into more than usual kindness by the man's strange utterance. "We've heern all that afore, and p'r'aps it's all true; but I've a weddin' in my house to-night, and my darter, they say, is the bride—the little girl, you know, who you catched once playin' on yer fiddle when you was cuttin' hay here, fifteen years nor more,—and ye kissed her for it, too. Come now, go in and see the little girl; you'd better."

And the man laid his hand kindly on Red Beard's shoulder. The latter started as if struck, and turning sharply upon the other, clutched him fiercely by the arm with the grip he long remembered, though it soon grew loose again, as of a man bewildered, and yet he clung to him and bent down his head towards the farmer as if heavy with thought and trying to recollect himself. Then after a lapse of silence he slowly raised himself, and said in a hesitating and dreamy fashion, as if with himself,

"I remember when out of this house in winter my father carried corn over the hill to a home where three little children had no bread, and how one mother prayed a blessing on Farmer Jones at one boy's bedside. Long ago, and the winter comes again, and the bed is empty too. 'Blessed are they who give, for they shall have.'"

"Well, well," said the good farmer, when all

this had chanted itself out, "never mind the winter nor that ere corn, but come and see my little girl, how nice she looks in that ere weddin' white of hern."

So the farmer led the man, fiddle and all, silent, and now submissive as a child, into the house by the kitchen door. When Granny Little, from her chimney corner, spied him out, she made a grab, according to her kind and judgment, at the tin dipper which held her wine, lest he should drink it, and all the rest made quick way. The dancers were on the floor for a new cotillon, but Red Beard passed among them as if there was only air about him, until he came to the corner where the bride stood half-cowering at the strange, towering man approaching.

"This ere is my little girl, my darter, Red Beard, that stole yer fiddle."

The man did not seem to hear the introduction any more than he seemed to see the people round him; but he halted before the bride and looked at her, moments, it seemed to the now silent company, and the same plaintive, beseeching look was in his eyes as when he had prophesied outdoors. Then slowly, and with a courtesy that might have been bred in a court, he bent down and kissed the bride's forehead. Then, without a word, he glided back the way he came, and was gone.

Of course there was much instant gossip over

the affair, while the bride looked a little pale. Most laughed, and all prepared to dance. But weddings have their perturbations as well as other things. This time it was a cry, or rather a series of cries, from the kitchen, and in the key of Granny Little. The Red Beard episode had just shocked the nerves of not a few, and there was a general rush to that quarter. Would the soul of Granny Little never rest? There she was, pirouetting in the middle of the floor, ribbons, Cologne bottle, rotundity, all together in an ecstasy of terror which exploded in screams. It was long before her tumult quelled to plain words.

“Why, what on airth ails ye, Granny?” cried Farmer Jones, who had seized her by the back sides of her red shawl, fearing she might go mad and bite. “Why, ye’re yellin’ like a stuck pig. Speak out, woman, quick.”

Granny passed through several stages of recovery. First, her incoherency turned to battle, when she regathered her shawl skirts out of the farmer’s hands with a mien and motion which betokened blows from two Irish fists as imminent. Then, in her feminine modesty, or at least the feigning of it, she fell into the fainting mood and called for drink, which was granted. Then, quite exhausted, she fell to silence, which no one of the bystanders, for a long time, could persuade her to abjure. But when she recovered that measure of

health which might be reasonably held to befit a wedding, from the rocking chair in mid-room, where in the fainting season they had set her, she told her story, too long to be repeated here; and besides, the interjections of it were not altogether nice. The substance was this: "I came to this Protestant weddin' and I have seen the devil. It'll take a dale of masses, me goin' to thim, to clinse me sowl."

"But where, Granny — where did you see him?"

"Jist there — jist there!" pointing to the middle of the wall before her. "Out he comes upon me, and if it hadn't bin for the Vargin —" At that instant of her unfinished sentence, from that very wall side, through the round hole, draped with a wooden door on a pivot, sprang forth the big house cat at Granny's feet. And then was Granny's soul in danger again, and she fell mad with fright. But two sturdy farmer boys held her in the chair till the fainting era came, and shortly after she was sent home in the farmer's tip-cart.

"It was only the cat, after all," said one, and the company roared in response. Some were curious to know how Granny could have been so amiss.

Punch once said of a Prussian king, a trifle too fond of Clicquot's champagne, and when the five points of the Eastern Question were on the carpets,

that every day after dinner his Majesty was able to discover ten. So the contents of one tin dipper in Blackberry Hollow might likewise have multiplied Granny's vision.

No one cares to know how a wedding party gets home — except themselves. This one got home with the ordinary luck. Granny rose late next morning, as her more serene sisters are apt to do after the feast. It was told about town that she had had a fit of *catalepsy*. Edward Vaughn gave his opinion of affairs next morning at the breakfast table to a couple of young men on a visit. "Yes. I believe in the brotherhood of man, and all that. I can swallow with my eyes shut, and a cooling draught after, the Declaration of Independence. But I tell you there are two equalities possible for man — an equality in the mud, and an equality among the stars. Democracy puts mankind at high-water mark, but you can only keep him there by an eternal use of floats. For myself, when I think how many sorts of people live within the horizon of these hills, and how they live, the riddle of life seems more complex than ever."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A LETTER.

SHORTLY after the wedding, Edward Vaughn was called away to the city, on business, for a fortnight. In his intervals of leisure he looked over the state of his affairs with Isabel Seaton, and it did not please him. It is from the outside, not too near, that one commonly gets the best perspective, and takes the measure of the situation, partly from its circumstance. When he looked, therefore, as it were from abroad upon his standing with that lady, he was surprised to find in it a danger. Not that he had anything to lose, as things went (for he thought himself able to play a blank against the heart of the whole female sex); but, as he was clearly not her lover, he saw fit to ask himself, in a particularly lucid moment, as he was dressing, exactly what he was. Was he a mere vulgar flirt, and so a coxcomb verging on gray hairs at that? So it looked; but if he were, he felt that a wise man would have taken better care of his manhood. Was he Le Clerke's avenger? Who had given him commission royal to right such wrongs, or was he a volunteer? Was he her

judge, taking the disguise of a somewhat ardent courtship to execute his own sentence upon a woman who was not even summoned to plead before his tribunal? She had certainly done him no mortal wrong, and might he not be conspiring against her peace? So what he got out of his self-inquest came to this, that his had not been brave behavior, and he was bound to make an end of it. Indeed, he suffered a sensation of self-contempt for several days following.

So it was a trifle awkward to find on his return a note from Miss Seaton on his table. It was simply a polite request that he would come to the house at his convenience, as she wished to consult him upon a matter it was hardly worth while to put in writing. Of course he went at an early date, and was received with the usual courtesy. If either face had a shadow of change, it was not hers. Only to a keen and friendly scrutiny was her face a trifle pale, and the eyes showed the effort of self-restraint. Vaughn, in the self-absorption of his better mind, noticed neither. So when he had arranged himself as usual, he went at his work in the old fashion.

“Well, Miss Belle, what is it you want to consult me about?”

“Oh, nothing! that is a trifle. I dare say you will think it nothing. But I was foolish enough to get just vexed a little when it came, and wrote

you a note, and then was half-sorry I sent it. The fact is, I have received a letter which I am not quite sure I ought to show you, but which perhaps you might think, if you ever came to know of its existence, you ought to have been told of."

"A letter to you which concerns me? I'll bet ten to one it is a lady's."

So Miss Belle went to the mantel, and took out somewhere from under its fringes a letter, which she brought back to him. Here is the letter for you to read. All this was done and said most gently, even graciously. Then she went back to the piano corner, and, facing him, waited for him to read. The letter was without date or signature. This is what he read:—

"It is reported in this city that you are receiving the addresses of Edward Vaughn. Be advised. Edward Vaughn has no heart. He will never love any woman. He is also pitiless and cruel towards our sex. Adieu."

Meanwhile the man read, and the woman watched his face. It was a short note, and he apparently reread it several times. And as he read, his face seemed to her to be slowly turning to stone, so rigid was it; and when at last he rose up, and went across the room to a table, and took a magnifying glass from it, it was as if a marble statue was walking. "Pardon me a moment," was all he said, as he came back, and

sat down. Then he examined the letter carefully with the glass. When he had done this, he stood up again, and looked at the woman before him, cold and almost expressionless in face, but with pulses throbbing until they almost trembled under the laces at her wrists, and said, "You should never have shown me this letter, Miss Seaton, for two plain reasons: first, because then it would have been as though it was not, at least as between us two; and second, because it forces me to say some things to you which I might have never said, or said in a very different fashion. This letter you put in my hands forces me as to time and place to say what at best no man would wish to say of himself. Please be seated, and I will speak of this letter."

"I will, if you please stand here."

"First then" (approaching her), "please look at the handwriting. Do you know it?"

"No; it looks to me made up—disguised; and yet it reminds me in parts of some one's I have seen. I fail to make it out."

"Now then, look at the *e*'s and *i*'s. Some are in usual form, but here are a half dozen writ in the form of the Greek *Epsilon* and the *Iota* with its grave accent. If you will examine with this glass this 'the,' you will see that the writer first made what we call the Greek *Theta*, and then for her own reasons over-wrote it with the ordinary let-

ters. I taught a woman once to write these signs into my letters exactly as she writes here. I know, also, by other proofs, your correspondent."

"But does the lady know you?"

"That is what I am bound to come to. That lady was once my betrothed wife." Then he halted until the silence became audible to one at least of the two, and at last went on in undertone—and with passages of vehemence. "This letter is a true bill of me and against me. It is as she says, though she should never have said it—never to you. This woman I loved once—loved as a man first loves, loved as upon the very knees of my soul in worship. She disgraced herself and me in an outburst of passionate folly, and love died with respect. I suppose my heart died also. At least I have found it so. When I say this, Miss Seaton, I accuse myself to you perhaps of more than folly or madness, of dishonor—sheer blank dishonor, as I have been in this house."

"I do not accuse you of anything. To me at present you are most interesting. Please go on. But just be so kind as to open one of those verandah windows; the air is very close." The man looked at his interlocutor. She was pale almost to white. Vaughn sprang to her side. "No, no," said the faint voice, "it will pass presently. Open a window, it is so very close here." When this was done, and Vaughn came back, the voice

said in its sweetest tones: "Please bring me a glass of water from the hall."

She took the water coolly, and with the dimpled hands sprinkled it almost fondly upon the white forehead, and after, holding her handkerchief over as if to dry the drops, or the fever, and the fever's pain—who can say which? "Water gives life," she said; "this was very grateful. Thank you very much. Please go on."

"There is but one step I can take—that perhaps I ought to take. It is all I can. This woman's letter—I—both have said truth. This is what I am. As I am I offer you my hand."

"There is nothing in your hand. No, thanks," she said graciously.

"But what then?"

"Nothing; let us be friends. It is a mere trifle. I will take you for a friend minus a heart. Hearts are troublesome things at best;" and she laughed a low, silvery laugh. Edward Vaughn would have protested further, but the lady insisted otherwise; and the conversation drifted to commonplaces until he took his leave. "Come up to dinner, any time," was her parting invitation.

The superb woman's pride of Isabel Seaton had conquered everything,—heartbreak, wrong, and the iron man who craved mercy and had been denied; conquered with an outward decorum that veiled contempt and a passionate will as strong as

death. What was her secret she had kept as hers.

"Tell Ma, when she comes in, that I have a headache, and shall not be down to dinner," she said to the servant, as she went to her room and locked the door deliberately. Then she went to her glass and saw herself pale, but with a face blank of expression. "Thanks for that," she muttered. "*He* saw nothing." Finally she sat down in her usual seat, facing the mantel. The window each side of it was open to the air, full of sunshine bathing the landscape with a great peace. The whirl in her brain was changing slowly to that sullen pressure which, when unlifted, crushes. Then it is that the mind moves slowly, or wanders until the will rouses to its point. There were no tears — not one. Over the mantel had always hung two Madonnas, which her taste had put there according to the fashion — one, Raphael's, the Dresden one, and the other and smaller one, on white porcelain, below, the Mater Dolorosa of Carlo Dolce.

Curiously enough, so unsteady is even a strong mind under a great burden, her eyes rested, with a certain vague interest, on the first Madonna. She had gone over the picture often, as her nature allowed, — the mother's grace, purity, and, above all, the infinite rest of her divine fruition, and the child in arms, with the veiled splendors of eyes

which seemed looking through time and space after His world—Lion of the tribe of Judah in his birth-blood, and brother of all in love. She went over it all again dreamily and aimlessly; all the faces, poses, and gestures of it, and at times a subtle power, which seemed to cross her will, held her to it—not in any artist's way of analysis, but as if something were clinging to her soul in it. It was her Sister of Joy who called. Then, after a while, her eyes wandered to the other; the woman bent under an invisible cross—a load not seen,—and wan and wasted with the passages of her life passion, and upon her her mind roused itself to grow intent. It even thought *at* the picture. Both were women; both under the shadows; both drinking deep a bitter draught—so far sisters, yes, Sisters of Sorrow. Yet the cowed lady of the picture had angels to minister to her, but the suffering woman there was alone before the mantel; alone as she thought, though the Madonnas over that mantel had left her their legend, that angels of rescue are everywhere for those who call. Then her mind, under the stress, finally wandered away into other things—back to her child days and her mother's arms, and even the glee and dance of young girlhood, in a curious medley of meditation, such as the mind takes on when its very roots are sharply moved. So, wandering, she finally came to her fate and Edward

Vaughn. Step by step — not hurriedly, but cautiously — as one who makes a venture of his all, she went over all that had been between them, sometimes fondly, and then with passionate regrets and sharp pangs, for what should not have been. It was true she loved him; he had touched the inner fountains of her nature, and she had given him her soul — woman as she had been, or was. And he had given her? An interview. That was all he said he had. What then had she? Hours together, pale and still, she asked her memories to answer her that question. And when she came back out of her past, she answered slowly, and without mercy to herself, that she had nothing — not even an endless desert for her future, for the waste itself had stars at night, and hers was the darkness which would never lift. So far, then, she stood upon the solid ground of a fixed conclusion. What next? she asked herself. Apparently it took hours more to answer — till nightfall, — moving not but making her tearless inquest. “I shall be better in the morning, Ma, and will not come down to-night,” was her reply inside her door to that lady outside. “It is only a headache, which will pass — to-morrow.” If hers had been a weak nature it would have gone under and emerged right soon from its trouble refreshed and quite ready for what more this naughty world might offer. Or if she had been controlled of

conscience she would have taken her fate, and, stripping off the bitter rind, have kneaded the kernel of it into her bread of life. Just as she was, and the great tide of her soul rose under the storm of her pride, presaging shipwreck. Steadily grew that storm until that tide was obliterating for her the whole world—and him. Hour by hour it rose, until it reached the cliffs, and beyond them, one had writ of old, there is no sea.

Then apparently she went at her work, whatever it might be. The watchers at a sickbed across the river afterwards told that there was seen a light all night in her chamber, and they after found that the candles had burnt low and been replenished. Sometime, also, she had set her little affairs in order, sealed letters directed to be returned, but not one word of hers for any. Her maiden's ornaments and trappings were also found arranged and laid away with no little care. Every scrap of her writing had disappeared—probably burnt, as the grate seemed to show. Two acts only in this storm of her pride showed traces of a human sympathy still left—the kiss she gave her mother's picture on the mantel, and the lingering gaze at her own portrait, when a child, beside it. She dressed herself carefully, even to her gloves, and prepared to go. It was quite daybreak, and the house was still. She could even hear the low breathing of her mother in the adjacent chamber.

She went down the hall stairs, unbolted the door, and passed into the night air. When she came to where the gravel walk descended to the road she turned an instant and looked towards the silent house in the shadows. Yes, it had been her home, she thought, and now — the desert. Alas! over her mantel were there not even then hanging those two Madonnas — sisters in woman's joys and sorrows forevermore, and the stars of peace were swinging themselves in retreat to their golden thrones at the coming of a new day? And why should this suffering child, with the outstretched hands of woman and God to save her, perish in her past? Yet she went away on a mission that forbade return.

CHAPTER XXX.

AT INDIAN WELL.

AUBREY bells rang out a sharp, angry peal, and then shortly after tolled. It was an ancient custom to use the bells this way when one was lost, to call the citizens to the search. Edward Vaughn was with John Walker at the wharf, overlooking the Qui Vive for a sail, when they rang. Of course, as both were new comers, neither knew their message, only that it was strange. A sense of alarm, coming somewhere out of the air, and unreasonably as it seemed to him, crept over Edward Vaughn as he listened.

"Go over to the town," he said, "and see what the trouble is." But the man had hardly gone across the lawn to the road when a messenger from the Seatons met him with a letter for his master. It read, in brief: "Miss Seaton left this house some time last night and cannot be found. The manner of her going fills us with the gravest apprehensions. Can you help us?" Edward Vaughn read the sinister words with a brain clamorous and roused to instant flame by the emotions that thronged there. In that short

moment, in a flash of fire, from above or below, as it might chance, the whole landscape, so to speak, of his past world with her unrolled before him, sharp-cut and vivid; and through all the crash and wildness of the storm that was now wrapping it in shadows, his conscience heard a monotone of accusations which framed that one word — THOU. Yet he had thought nothing out; indeed, there was no time. His soul, the whole of him, roused to a very delirium of self-consciousness, seemed to have mutinied against him, and set up for itself, so haughty and outspoken it was. Yet there was only one man in him, and that man had a will which so far in his career had asserted lordship. So, in a spasm of reason, he sprang at his soul with his will as it lay trembling and abased before the open gates of the Temple of the Furies, and smote it down with iron to the more common level of rational thought, where it lay asking its master what he was pleased to do. That was soon answered. "My business just here and now is to help find this woman, Isabel Seaton."

"Tell the hostler to bring me my saddle-horse. You are to go on with the boat, and stay about here where I can find you if I want you. Be quick."

So while John Walker went for the horse Edward Vaughn waited upon himself. It was

not a merry comrade, anyhow; quite the reverse; and when himself became mutinous again and approached the stormy gates, he flung back the offender without pity and set himself to his task. Vaughn was by nature a man to act and control affairs, though the idleness of his money had made this mastery in him a trifle laggard. So when he mounted his horse he had laid out his work. "All roads on the Seatons' side of the river go down south to the coast," he reasoned, "and that way lies the city. Up the river is only the wild. If, then, Miss Seaton hides herself, or in any maze or freak intends to go to other friends, she would undoubtedly travel south. But the road through Blackberry Hollow cuts all these roads east and west. Follow that road and perhaps get news by the way."

So he rode into Blackberry Hollow at a dash. Farmer Jones hailed him at his gate with "Squire, who's lost? that them bells has ben ringing for over in the town."

Vaughn told him.

"Well; that's tarnation curus, now. My man, Jake, here, went arter a stick of timber airly this mornin', and he telled the wimmin folk how he seen a woman, just arter daylight, goin' down that ere river road—that ere road what crosses down before you come to the sawmill there. Here, Jake, I want ye," he called towards the house.

The man came out, and to Edward Vaughn's sharp questioning gave plain answers. He had met a woman on that road early, about the middle of the second hill down it, and she had turned out of the road to her left for his ox team. He had not seen or did not remember her face. He had merely thought it was strange to meet a woman there so early, and wondered where she was going. That was all he knew.

So Edward Vaughn rode down that road. The very rage of his will was on him, and the man who rode was carrying into his venture his wholeness — the very soul of him intent to find and to bring back. The second hill was soon reached. Half-way up, a ravine of rocks and bushes pushed hard into it on the right, while on the left a sand gorge under the winter rains had poured its sands (yellow sand) to the very ruts. He checked his horse sharp and gave them a quick, eager search. Yes, there they were, fresh footprints — small, sharp-cut, with the heel-marks, he noted, set incisively into the soft earth, as of one who hurried or was on an errand. In that lonely road just now, ten to one and these were Isabel Seaton's footmarks. He flung himself from his horse, and, bridle in hand, he inspected them on his knees. The trail was down the road, and, he felt, was found. So, leading his horse, and with head bent low and eager, he followed it. Occa-

sionally it took to the sward beside the path, or crossed the road and was lost for a season. But the then baffled man would find it again at the sand stretches, and it always went down the road. A mile or more of this work and he came to the crest of the hill, at the base of which he knew was Indian Well. It was a rough, woody country with broken rocks and boulders flung in among the forest trees along the hill slopes. Here the trail ended upon the hard gravel of the summit. In vain he laid himself to the path and sought for the slightest footmark. The road itself gave no token. On his right, the hill crest through which the road went rose still higher under the forest, but his search along the face of it, and even along at the woods where the hill sank to the level again, gave no sign — not even a trampled leaf nor a bent bush. No one had gone that way. Then he came back to where the trail ended, searching the east side. No sign anywhere. So the eager man stood at the last footmark visible, and forced his soul against the problem. The last footmark was straight down the road, and yet it was clear that she had not gone that way. What then? He tied his horse by the road side and looked. Through the thin trees by the roadside eastward there showed an open field. If she went down to the Well, he reasoned, a woman would rather take this field than the woods.

“I will search back and cross her track if she has gone there.” So he went back the way he came, carefully sparing the silent footprints in the sands, until he came to the field corner. Then he swung himself over the bush fence and emerged into the open. Ah! how many times after did he recall his glance in that late summer day at that landscape below in the sunshine — the lazy smoke of the factory chimneys rising into cloud pillars against the white north, the peaceful white cottages among green fields and the sails of the vessels going upon the winding river, deep among its pine hills, toward the sea. And his mission here? He traversed rapidly that field in a sort of semicircle from north to south. It was sown to grass which had not been mown by the late farmer and was in parts withered. There was no trace of any one in all its broad acres until he came to its south verge. Then the man started back as from a blow on the brain. Yes; there indeed was a trail of some one in the grass, running down by the woodside towards the Well. How the dry, bent grass-stalks glistened along that trail shimmering in the sunshine as he looked. He followed it. At the end of it a pair of bars stood against the woods and had not been let down. Edward Vaughn bent over the bars and searched the dry wood leaves the other side.

Some were fresh broken or upturned as if stepped .

on. Indeed the trail grew fresher every moment. He followed rapidly, and he knew was nearing the Well. A rough jangle of rocks lay just before him on that crest, where, below, the waters of the simple stream were pouring themselves into its granite basin. Yet the trail led thither. He climbed the crest and strove to look down the slope under the trees. There was nothing human visible. "Ten rods below there is the Well," he said to himself, "and no human creature could go far down this way and live. I will search in the ravine below." So he swung round to his left and went down, his soul in a very rage of will to find, perhaps save. From what? *Had* he saved?

The glen was a rock chaos, mostly. But before he reached it, in his passionate rush among the boulders, he heard the sound of a human voice. He halted and listened. It seemed one was singing, with fitful intervals of silence, what he could not make out. It sounded like a chant in a man's voice. He broke through the dividing forest to the stream bed a hundred feet or so from where it leaves the Well. Just below him a man stood or rather moved in a very ecstasy of laboring at somewhat. It was Red Beard. As he moved or rather sprang at his task, the leaf shadows flecking his gaunt figure, and anon the sun shining into and through his hair tremulous with the wind and the man's passion, whatever it might turn out to

be, gave him certainly a most ghostly and uncanny look, as of one in a rage or delirious. It did not take long for Edward Vaughn to assure himself that he had gone stark mad and was in a violent mood. It was strange work he was at. In the centre of the stream bed where he was the rocks had piled themselves together into a sort of irregular pyramid, but flat at the top. Here the man, with much industry, had gathered the driftwood of the stream and the broken branches into some sort of pyre or altar, and when Vaughn came had just fired the same, as he stood below and was watching the flame. And as the fire rose red through the trees, crackling and champing at its food, or the red embers and half-burnt logs fell down upon the sand, this Red Beard was replacing them above or adding new fuel, all in an ecstatic fashion, and singing, as has been noted. Occasionally he would kneel as if making prayers.

Vaughn watched him long enough to know that there might be danger in him, and that a crazed brain is very uncertain in its fellowship. Yet he was confronting a greater danger all that morning and he was here to go on in his search. So he called to him quietly and by name.

The priest, or whatever he fancied himself, turned starply at the voice and looked. Then a shudder seemed to pass over him, and he looked

on and on without words. Finally he stretched out two hands in a half-beseeching fashion, and kept them there until he said in the old chanting way, as at the wedding, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." Vaughn went to him with his offered hand, which he took no notice of, but said in the same weird tones, "I am glad that you have come. I wanted you."

What followed then at that fire waxing hotter and higher in that summer's day could never be put in words. Edward Vaughn always said so in after years. The man was crazed in that way that moments of reason were always showing through the madness, as the sand crests on the coast show an eye's-blink through the over but receding billows. It was madness allied with wit, and therefore, as Vaughn saw, possibly more dangerous. As far as Vaughn could make out, it was the old story of his religious craze—the Great White Throne had come and the world was burning up with fire. Only it was uncertain whether he fancied himself Him that sat on it, or a priest of His to offer a sacrifice of propitiation for the world's sins. Some people after, hearing the tale as Vaughn told it, thought that his unstrung mind, shocked by what it had accidentally found at an earlier hour of the day at the Well, had entirely broken, and that he had in some vague way built this as the funeral pyre for

the dead, or perhaps to offer in flame a sacrifice, such as, after, Edward Vaughn shuddered to think of.

Yet he humored the dangerous, powerful lunatic beside him as best he could, listening, and answering, with all the courtesy and tact he knew, his vagrant words, and even helped him with his oft-replenished fire. He said, after, that these moments were ages he had spent in hell for his most mortal sins, so ghastly were they with the storm of his own agony confronting and mingling with the rage of the mad. Yet he had collected himself as a man does just before his word which will unlock the thunder of the battle. So he said coolly, in an interval of the madness, "Have you seen anything of a young woman about here to-day?" The man bent his head as if trying to recall something which his mind was only able to snatch at; and at last, by a supreme effort, as the clouds covered again, said, "Yes, she was young; yes, beautiful—in white robes—and has gone away." And then at once the fit was on him and he raved. Vaughn waited for the paroxysm to end itself, and then went to him and took him gently by the arm. "Come now, my man, and show me where the lady is." Apparently the words had touched his sanity, for he said slowly, "Come with me and I will show." Then he relapsed into the old jargon. Yet the movement of the

two had begun up and towards the Well, and hand on shoulder they went over the stony stream bed and even in its very flow—the dazed man as if led, and yet half-guiding,—until they came to the little sand plateau which the waters had thrown up in freshets as they flowed from the Well. There they halted, the man limp and dazed as if exhausted. “Where now, Red Beard, will we go for the lady? Come, brace up now, and show.” He roused again to his semi-reason and gazed eagerly in the speaker’s face, saying “Come and see;” and as he spoke Vaughn saw his madness crouching at the heels of his words. “Come,” he said, and as he spoke his right arm moved itself even gently round Vaughn’s waist till it felt as a full circle there, and then still creeping on and in until the arm felt like an iron band crushing out the life. “See,” and in a whirl the two men stood on the verge of the Well, looking down into its waters, green with their very depth and purity. In the madman’s grasp, and his gaze could neither have been long or steady, but Edward Vaughn looked long enough to see under the gurgling waters, where they touched the shallower sands, a hand and part of an arm—a hand stretched out and up as if beckoning—a little hand—a woman’s. He would have known those finger tips, he thought, over the world.

The madman also, roused by something he saw, broke into fresh fury. "See, there — there is the sacrifice. Let us descend into the very tomb for it. You and I must fetch it. Come," and he was dragging Vaughn towards the waters. His clutch had the sane man at advantage, and there was instant danger. Yet, cool as ice, Vaughn had wit to say quietly, and to humor that madness he could not quell, "Yes, but before the sacrifice comes the prayer. Why don't you pray now? you the priest, and then I'll help." The man seemed to fall again into the old mental lassitude and confusion of a mind which could not recollect itself, and unloosed his grasp as if trying to think. Edward Vaughn stepped back so as to put the man between him and the Well, and waited. There was death about, and he would fain live.

"No," said the man suddenly, and turning sharply to find Vaughn behind him. "There shall be no prayers but at the altar. No, I say, let us go down and find the sacrifice."

"I'll not go, Red Beard, unless after prayers," was the cold, quiet answer.

Then Red Beard sprung at him, towering, swift, and raging. There was perhaps twelve feet of strand; and around were rocks. Vaughn saw him coming and stood out amid, with feet firm under him, and eyes that gleamed cold light, as of

one who meant not to submit to die. The madman clenched him firm and strong, but Vaughn's arms this time were under, and they strove there without words. The sane man had an old skill in wrestle and a cool brain, but the other had muscles of iron. So, often in the paroxysm of his madness he lifted Edward Vaughn as a child and shook him as a very reed in his hand. It was only moments, though it seemed hours to one. His brain was cool, yet his left arm had been lately set, and he was clearly overmatched in muscle. So he put brain into his lack and in the bitterest passages kept quiet and suffered violence, not wasting his strength. Yet that strength was ebbing, and the madman at his throat. Yet he held his reason still. In the old days he had known a lock in wrestling, which if it fail is fatal, but when well done conquers. It was his only chance, and he waited for it. It came when his man slipped a trifle on a stone. Quick as a flash, with his whole weight gone into the spring, he locked with him in a burst of physical will and rage greater than any and threw him senseless and quivering upon the rocks below. It was fate that Edward Vaughn should live.

He went down to the man, of late so dangerous. He felt the pulses — still there, but flickering. Then he lifted and laid him upon the sand where they had struggled, and bathed the face

in water out of the stream. So after awhile the man came slowly back to consciousness — that is, madness. “I must leave you here awhile, my poor fellow,” Vaughn said, “where nobody will hurt you and you will hurt no one.” So he took off the great woollen comforter which the man always wore, and bound his hands and feet and laid him, unresisting, carefully down. I shall be back presently, my man.”

So Edward Vaughn went back sturdily toward town. “The lady is found,” he said to Farmer Jones at his gate. “It is a sad business. Keep your horse harnessed; they will want your help later on.” Then he rode straight into town to the Mayor’s office, and told briefly the catastrophe at Indian Well. Next he went to the rectory and told Mr. Ardenne. “You must go and break the news to the Seatons. I cannot go there.”

In her brave struggle with Edward Vaughn Isabel Seaton had said that water was life. Was it so at the Well?

And there are those who offer prayers for the dead.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM.

IN due time the earth covered in Aubrey Parish; but there was that still living which it could not cover. Of course many things were said about the sad catastrophe, a few with charity. Indeed, it was stoutly affirmed by some that Miss Seaton's death was purely accidental, and that in some unaccountable daze she had wandered away among the rocks and fallen over the precipice at Indian Well. In reply it was pointed out that there were no bruises such as might come with such a fall. Yet the many words lapsed into that silence in which the great world goes eager to its old wish and work and the dead sleep so long.

But not so with one man, at least, in that town, whose soul was hearing sad, sharp, ghostly words, and that too not from comrades whom he might forsake, but from himself whom he could not evade. The torrent caught by crags is apt to be cruel, and Edward Vaughn's life was in straits. In the days which followed, long, and bare of verdure and of sunshine, he too found the desert and how bitter life is in that land which

has no living waters. In the reaction which followed that stormy outburst of his will, which drove him to the very feet of Death at Indian Well, conscience came to her throne once more and gave decrees. She came up through the stony rifts of Edward Vaughn's nature, such as life had made it, from a realm where the childhood of him had once dwelt, up through the dry leaves and ashes of his worldly habit, and made challenge to be heard, even though his sun were darkened and his moon turned into blood. His will obeyed this time one who is the queen of glory to us mortals.

It may well be doubted whether at any time Edward Vaughn's brain had touched firmly the fact of Isabel Seaton's passion. And if it approached to do so, there was manhood enough in him (so strangely mixed are such men's natures) to have taken alarm as at a suggested wrong to be done the defenceless dead, and to reject in his pride the ungenerous supposition. Yet enough remained to give him great hurt. With us men, the grave, which is so dark, casts back a strange light upon our past words and deeds, so that we seem to be weighing them in the scales of another world than this where we err and wound so often. Regrets, when there is no longer voice to forgive, are long and sore. So for days and days, longer than we may care to count, Edward Vaughn

endured a great human penitence beyond words. It was penitence for his own wreck. He had lost himself. When Blanche De Forest had made shipwreck of his love, his honor was still left. And if, in after years, he had grown sinister or hard towards the world, he had yet managed to be just and upright in its affairs. But now he felt that he had wronged, and deeply wronged, Isabel Seaton, and that too by an insincerity unworthy a just man. He had indeed even lost the right to accuse Blanche De Forest. That very justice in whose name he blamed her he had denied another. The maniac who lay bound and trembling before him at Indian Well was indeed a wreck. But measured by the higher law of his higher station was he himself less so?

So when his conscience, that is, his soul on its side of virtue, led him into the Temple of Rectitude and set him before the great, white statue of Duty, in that ghostly presence, with a bitterness which little men never know, he confessed that so far in this life he was the unworthy.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SIR CHAUNCEY DE VERE AGAIN.

SIR CHAUNCEY, as guardian of Helen De Vere, held high court once more in Florence. If we should mistake him for a just man come to the woolsack to mete out righteousness, we should call it his last assize. Anyhow, he was working late. Sir Chauncey was not young when he made his first bow in this story, and that was ten years ago. Besides, these years had subtracted no penalty due from those gone before. They had rather added. Pleasures like his are sure to become a man's later pains. So while for more than half a century they had graven, year by year, their legend in the heavy face lines and the obesity of a man, fat-fed, blushing vermilion and yellow over all their handiwork, they also found their way down where life was, and, first making turbid, next dried up, the vital forces. Old age, indeed, is a judgment day for the mortal in us, and the body is the court record. Our immortality pleads at another bar somewhat later on.

In plainer words, Sir Chauncey was fading out; slowly indeed, but yet dying. This he knew, but

took nobody else into his confidence. Vice at the end is apt to be solitary, and he had neither wished friends nor made them. It was on the cards, he said to himself, to die sometime, and all he had to do when the winning card lay on the table against him was to yield his hand. He was nowise afraid to die, because he had never been afraid to live as he had; but the circumstance of his future did not seem to him either well-bred or pleasing. There would be an awkward uncertainty about his dinners, and the valetship, especially of worms, looked a trifle vulgar. There was also just a semitone of conscience, or at least of the dust of a dead one, which made itself heard on the frontiers of meditation. At any rate it was time to set his house in order, and he went about it.

When he was well-nigh through, he was pleased to call for Helen De Vere to assist. It was the same house, and indeed the same room, to which Sir Chauncey had wandered back, and where, five years before, his niece had spoken her "No" against Sir John English. Curiously enough, in a world where we say things happen, it turned out, as Helen after found, the very day on which Frederic Ardenne had gone to the Seaton's, striving to comfort. She remembered the details of the day itself long after—the yellow, Italian sunshine in the square outside, and the stifling

midsummer air within doors — yes, and the great, gloomy room, with its sombre but stately furniture, into which the servant ushered her. Sir Chauncey, and his valet had dressed him carefully that morning, though they were an hour at it; and when Helen came in he was seated in his easy chair by his table, on which was a litter of papers. Then, with an unwonted courtesy, he proceeded to rise and receive her. It was long to rise, as of a man under a load clutching at an invisible staff to prop him up, but neither servant nor woman dared to help, so proud was his weakness to conceal itself, nor did Helen venture to offer sympathy, lest it should be rejected harshly by the man in full toilette. Once on his feet, and they well under him, as when one doubts his standing-power, he said to the valet, “You may go outside, and come at the bell,” and to the niece, with a gesture not lacking grace, “Sit in this chair near me; I wish to speak with you.” Then both sat down, the man, as he rose up, with caution. When Helen recalled that face in after years, it was as if she saw the charnel-house. The world — Sir Chauncey’s world — was in it, and at its sunset.

“There are two papers, Miss De Vere,” he said slowly, halting between the words, “on that table. Bring me the one on top — the one with the red tape round it.” He took the paper and said, opening it with deliberation: “Here you will find

an inventory of your property now in my hands and a statement of my account as guardian. Most of your money is in the funds deposited in the Bank of England. There is about a third more than when I had it. I wish you to give me a release, and take your own. But before doing it, I advise you to see the lawyers and go over the schedule. That is business."

"But why, Uncle, trouble yourself about this matter?" Helen said gently.

"Because, my child" (here followed something indistinct, as if the throat muscles had contracted and refused their service) — "because, my child" (and now he spoke plainly), "I wish it." For the first and last time in all his life, he had said, "My child."

The pathos was not that he had no heir, but that his life had long since shut against his soul the golden gates of childhood.

Having said thus much he relapsed, it may be, into mere thought again. Sir Chauncey had lost the ethics while he retained the mathematics of a conscience. Exact in business all his life, to the smallest bet he ever made, it was not her right, but his own habit, which led him to account for the last farthing due.

"There is one other thing," he said, after a while, with a preliminary clutch at his throat as though something caught him there, "I wish to

mention. Bring me that sealed envelope which lay under the other paper."

It was brought. He broke the seal and took out a document, opened it, seemed to go over it page by page and at last refolded it and held it in a hand which did not tremble.

"This is my will, made lately here. I have left my property to you. The total is something more than your estate, land in part and London houses, well insured and let. The income will buy your ribbons, and I advise you to sell the land. No woman should hold land, it is too troublesome; and, mark me, lend money only on an English bond. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Uncle; you are very kind. But why not give your estate to your sister instead of me?"

"My sister is growing old and I wish you to have it. I settle that matter my way. But, I make only one condition. I want your promise."

"What promise, Uncle?" and for the first time in the interview she remembered how the man before her was strangely, yes, cruelly, persistent. Her soul watched now open-eyed. Sir Chauncey bent forward from his chair, with both hands grasping the table, until his outstretched head came low before her, as if half in supplication, and then the gray eyes, with a cold gleam as

of polished steel, seemed to be cutting their way into her still unspoken secret.

"Will you promise me that you will never marry that man? I mean that priest, Ardenne." He who could not win by violence would bribe his victory, then.

"Do not ask me to promise that, Uncle. I have obeyed you long and silently. Have mercy, Uncle."

"Mercy! s-s-s-t!" — his words fairly hissed; "you love him then,—this Ardenne?"

"Yes, Uncle."

"Will you give him up?"

This time, both for Sir Chauncey's health and because her life abode where love had long shut the door against either storm or frost, and where the sun never set, she answered with a gentleness of voice, as if from far away, "No, Uncle, I can never promise you that."

The man glared at her with the cold steel eyes, and long. Then slowly he recovered himself back in his chair.

"At least oblige me, then, by touching that bell before you," was all he said.

The man came to the bell, and at Sir Chauncey's side. "Bend down your head, man," and he whispered something in his ear. It was, "Bring me here the notary. Quick!"

Then to Helen De Vere he said, with a stately

coldness, not usual in him, "You may go now, Miss De Vere. You do not please me." She bowed and went with no more words.

What after happened in that room, before the living opened the door she shut behind her, was to be guessed at chiefly. Sir Chauncey had made a will and a mistake, and meant to rectify both. The mistake was that he had not put the condition, which Helen would not accept, into the will itself. Perhaps his malice nodded, or perhaps it was a providence. At least he took his chances, and they had gone against him. A new will would remedy all. The rest was conjecture. Something kept telling Sir Chauncey that his sands were running low. The will in his hand was wrong, and the notary might come late. He had managed, somehow, to walk or crawl to the further end of the table, where was a taper. He lighted it, and then holding the will to its flame tried to burn it. But the sands were running very low, and malice is not so strong as death. When his door opened to the notary, they found him prone and stiff, the will beside him, with its burnt edges, and the lighted taper waiting. The first two pages of the will were a trifle torn, as if, despairing of the flame as the last agony came on, he would fain try to rend some one's happiness.

Sir Chauncey's life had been consistent, yet its harmony was not, to say the least, celestial, and

brought good to none. The soldier who had won his bride away from him had slept long upon his bed of fame, and Sir Chauncey to his last gasp plotted revenge. His rage against the dead, so cruel to the living, closed his eyelids.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LIBERTY AT LAST.

THERE are times in the life of most of us when our heart and our conscience maintain a sad strife between them. This happens to the sincere when they have deeply loved another who has proved unworthy. Then, after a bitter struggle, our conscience gives its unswerving verdict, while the heart submits weeping. There is indeed the ancient epigram, "*Nihil de mortuis nisi bonum ;*" but then it is a heathen sentiment, as the Latin shows. Indeed, as usually spoken, it is the device of cowardice to veil shame in its grave. Perhaps the Christian epigram would read, "Nothing of living or dead but truth."

If this be so, Helen De Vere now followed the higher ethics. She reviewed again Sir Chauncey's life, as she had seen or felt its quality, and in all her woman's charity, much as she wished it otherwise, she could not find in her memory a resting-place for love. Yet in the silence of Sir Chauncey's sleep she heard the ringing bells of her own release sounding in the new sunshine. Men tell of prisoners so wonted to their chains that they

sorely miss their clank, when broken. The bird let from his cage may try a turn or two above the library shelves, but he soon comes back with weary wing to his old prison. The world is too wide for his weakness. Not so with Helen De Vere. For her the granite walls had crumbled, and her soul rose up to bathe itself in the new freedom.

Sir Chauncey had willed to be buried where he died; and after his solemnities the two women prepared to go. There were boxes of *bric-a-brac* and trunks to be packed; but Helen, as the younger, stood forth sturdily until all was done. It was hardly a week at most before she was leaving Florence for her home. But where was that? It was too far away just now for much impatience; but the diligence over the pass was slow and the iron wheels were laggard to Helen's heart, as the two women fared across the Continent. In London, too, great, smoky, busy, lonely London, Helen met weeks of law courts and lawyers on every hand, all ready to assist her with delays and fees. Sir Chauncey's stewardship was clean, however, wherever she met it, and her prompt, curt, business ways surprised her lawyers who did not know her secret. It was with a buoyant heart, then, after weeks of business, that she flung off London; and her psalm of life, so tender, so grateful, and so full of hope, which was

singing itself in all her waking hours, rose into a pæan almost as the train swung into Chester, though its iron wheels did not hear the joy. It was yellow autumn sunshine on the old houses, which seemed more sere and wrinkled than ever. Once in her hotel, and she forthwith prepared to leave it, to the disgust of the portly waiter suggesting dinner.

"I shall be back, Auntie, by-and-by. I know Chester streets, and am going on a little business." So she went to the Cathedral Close. The dingy brick houses were as reticent and formal as of old, but new children were at their plays, and the faces she met were strange. "Ten years have erased much," she said to herself, "and yet I am here again as of old." Was she? Ten years of a woman's life like hers had made her vastly more. The very love that urged on her footsteps was saintlier.

She rang the bell of the clergy house and sent in her card to any one of the clergy, as she told the servant. The man who came to her happened to be a middle-aged, pragmatic Englishman, far gone, it may be told, in bachelorhood, who, holding her card in hand, was pleased to say, leisurely, overlooking the fresh-colored countrywoman before him, "Yes, Miss De Vere; a stranger here, I fancy. In what can I serve you, madam?"

Miss Helen had lately completed her business

education among the London lawyers. So she said at once, "Have you a list of the American clergy? I wish to find the name of the Rev. Frederic Ardenne."

"Ardenne! Ardenne! it seems as if I had heard that name in Chester, possibly on the Cathedral books," the man half-mused to himself.

"Yes, both he and his uncle were here as clergymen;" and her loyal heart wondered how soon the world forgets. "But have you the list I asked for?"

"A thousand pardons, madam, I think we have. If you will please come to the library I will look." So Helen sat down, while the man searched leisurely among the library shelves—an age or two, as it seemed to her heart. Finally he came back with a thin little pamphlet. "Here is the list, and we will look." Helen stood beside him at his desk, while he, adjusting his eyeglass, formally inspected the document, unconscious of the heart-beats at his elbow.

"Ah! yes, here we have it, 'Rev. Frederic Ardenne, Aubrey Parish, Diocese of Riverland.'" And he held up the leaf for her inspection. He was there, then, at his post, as he had promised.

"And please, where is Riverland?"

"Ah! that I can't say. Perhaps the maps will show. Let us look again;" and he rummaged in

the alcoves, bringing back a handful of dusty maps.

"Yes, here it is, a New England diocese, with this river running through it. Not very far in the wild, you see; one of their oldest dioceses, I fancy, in the new civilization westward. Do you know any one there?"

"Only Mr. Ardenne."

"Ah, yes, I see; an old rector of yours, perhaps."

"I am engaged to be his wife," Helen answered simply, even coldly.

The parson rose to his feet and looked at her. "I beg pardon, madam, for my careless question. Allow me," he added, as he looked, "to congratulate *him*. The gentleman himself I have never seen."

When Helen took leave with thanks, she went straight to St. John's. There was no one in the old church except the gray-haired sexton, and she went to her old pew to make her prayers. Curiously enough, her psalm of life to-day was rising almost fiercely, so far as her gentleness allowed, in that sinewy song of the Hebrew priest:—

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

"And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ;

“As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began :

“That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us.”

Then she went out into the churchyard, and sat down on the very stone where ten years ago her vows had been made. The Saxon king in the tower was keeping his watch as ever, and another King Invisible was watching His. Life there among the dead was mounting high in Helen's heart, throbbing towards peace at last. The sea in the west was wide ; but the man beyond the sea, who once sat here beside her in a sacramental hour of bliss, had not changed, and she was free !

She stood up alone among the graves and looked round on the old church and the hills and the houses of the town, all aglow in the red sunset. Let the night cover Chester graves and the old sorrows. Her new life was in the West. •

There is a curious continuity, perhaps kinship, in the human soul. Blood is blood red in every heart, although the microscope would show the white and red corpuscles to differ in each, while the heart varies in size and fibre. So the passion in Helen's heart, as she went back to her inn, was strangely like that of the Chaldean maiden of forty ages back, sister of hers in constancy, who answered so strong and maidenly to Abraham's

servant, "I will go," and left her kindred to dwell with Isaac.

She came home to Miss Hannah with a quick, eager step.

"I have just telegraphed for our state-rooms in the next steamer to America, Auntie. *He is there.*"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE AGNOSTIC.

WHEN Edward Vaughn became bankrupt in self-respect, among his personal assets was a rather thin residuum of faith. This, too, now disappeared with the general wreck. His religion — that which bound him in any wise to the supernatural — had been at best a mere tradition, which he had inherited with the family plate, and now simply ceased to be. If in Blanche De Forest he had lost faith in human kind, and his after-life had brought no recovery, he had now lost himself. And since, at the core of his being, below the wreck, conscience still gave out a flickering light to his congested reason, the new poverty was sore. With the crass cloud over his soul he could know naught of the soul's world which some men still call God. Besides, he had always held that every gentleman should have a religion, as a part of his social station, and the present situation was not well bred. To go at random to morning service on pleasant Sundays, and, on entering church, to go on one's knees with one's face in one's hat for a moment's silent prayer

for something not very definite was not a difficult penance, and showed decorum. But to worship that which is not, is at least to mock one's self, and add another lie to the vast aggregate.

Edward Vaughn's agnosticism was not from speculation, as some men's is, nor from a chronic baseness of life, as is true of others, but from the wreck into which his whole life had fallen. He had often wrestled with creatures of flesh and blood, and was ready to do so again. But to face a world empty of God, and filled full to its lips with dust turning to ashes; to hear in men's voices the cry of apes trooping down to an eternal sleep; to see under the maid's blush of beauty and the child's smile of purity only the gray mould of a final decay; in short, to regard human life in individuals and generations as a vagabond without a master or a leader, stumbling on and down to the shut gates of the Unknown—this was to deny to him or any man the very substances of any virtue or any victory. To stand on the edge of an abyss a mere piece of matter kneading itself by chance into no one's image, and to confront a universe living only to perish daily, perhaps never gave true joy to any one. Certainly not to Edward Vaughn. The very muscle of all endeavor shrivelled in the nightshade of the world's nothingness.

So for days and weeks he sat down, and dwelt

among ruins, with his soul asking for only a glimpse of something that lived on, and was forever; but there was no voice nor any that answered. Occasionally he found his way to the parish church as an experiment; but the words of faith sounded to him like the jargon of an unknown tongue. God had disappeared; and what was left? His pride bade him bear his own burdens, and so he faced the pang of his agnosticism without flinching or asking aid. But one day, under his strain, an impulse sent him to the rectory. Curiosity woke in him to ask what anything that called itself Christianity really had to say for itself. The rector was educated and a gentleman; and how could anything harm an agnostic?

In the rector's comfortable library Edward Vaughn went at once to his business.

"I would like to say, with your permission, Mr. Ardenne, not in the way of a confession (for I should make a poor penitent, I fancy), nor to provoke argument, that of late things have grown rather mixed in my consciousness. In fact, life at its roots has become more of a riddle than ever. I don't mean to say that I believe nothing. I do mean to say that I should be glad to believe something. Will you do me the favor to state to me the grounds on which men like you — I mean educated and reasonable men — base what is called Christian faith?"

"You must confess," the other said, smiling, "that your question is a very broad one. Where shall I begin?"

"Anywhere."

"Well, then, as there is to be no argument — which, as between men well matched, is apt to end with itself, — I shall be very glad to inquire with you, and give you whatsoever help lies in showing you my own very plain position. First of all, as a minister of this Church, I accept her authority as a teaching Church, and take her creeds for mine as statements of the faith I am bound to hold. I do not suppose these creeds contain the faith in its entirety, because I cannot see how language, which is a finite vessel, can convey or contain an infinite idea. For instance, when I say I believe in God, I do not suppose that Saxon word of three letters can contain or communicate to me the Divine Father in His wholeness. In the Church, from the start, a creed has been called a *symbolum* — a symbol, — a formal and useful hint of something beyond words. Besides, when I see that every mind has its own grasp on the creed, never identical with any other, and that no man's grasp upon the truth is always the same or ever such as to embrace all that is in the words themselves, I have long since come to look upon creeds as walls which the Church wisely builds around her sheepfold for the security and the liberty of the sheep. Within

these walls I dwell, and teach others to do the same. Here is the place, not to sleep and waste, but for a man's wholeness to wake and live a broader, sweeter life than elsewhere. Men say, 'Yes, but you sacrifice reason to authority.' I answer, I choose my authority by an act of my reason, just as I choose my doctor and after obey his directions for my cure. Faith must be the obedience of reason to an authority which is valid; superstition the obedience of reason to an authority which is not."

"But suppose I deny that any Church authority is valid?"

"Exactly. I have said so much to explain myself—not to convince you. The question of Church authority is long, and, in what I suppose your present state of mind, not likely to hold you to faith."

"How then do you propose to build me up into any sort of certainty?"

"By going down to the roots of your consciousness and talking frankly as man should with man. First, are you sure of anything—of your existence—of your senses, say?"

"Moderately sure of some things. Yes."

"So far, so good. For you might raise the question, as others have, whether our very consciousness and senses are not deceivers. In that case you would destroy the validity of all thought.

But inasmuch as most men go in their affairs upon the basis that these mental faculties of ours are not liars but truth tellers, there is no reason why they should deny them the same ability in spiritual matters. For instance, take the question of whether there is any God. If a man says, 'Prove me God,' I answer I cannot do that, in a mathematical way at least, although I do not doubt that He is. I cannot prove Him from my consciousness, because a man might deny I had one or that it was correct. And yet the argument for God is to me overwhelming, and based on a reason which I trust every hour. For instance, you and I go in common affairs upon the rule that thought implies a thinker, contrivance a contriver, arrangement an arranger. But science tells me the world is full of thought, contrivance, arrangement, and these, too, beyond any human ability, from sand-grain up to star. Shall I cross the mental habit of mankind and say the world has the action without the actor — godlike energies without a God? Men will say all these world virtues come by natural law. I answer, did the law make itself? Is there not a lawgiver? But they answer further, 'The world order comes by selection, evolution, or by accident.' Well, I have a plain answer for myself at least. I hold in my hand the twenty-six letters of the alphabet on as many blocks of wood, one letter on each. I throw these blocks

down upon the floor. How long would it take for them to select or evolve themselves, as they lie there, into their sequence from A to Z, or how many times must I throw them down before they will fall from my hands into that order? And yet I am asked to admit that this magnificent universe, in parts and whole, came by accident. I say it is a greater violence to reason to believe this than to believe that order implies an Orderer."

"But a clever man may say, 'I admit the Orderer, but he must still remain the Unknown—the Unknowable.'"

"Yes, but only in the same way that all common things remain so. I suppose that a fly's wing to a degree is the unknowable and the unknown to the most skilled *savant*, microscope in hand. Yet the fly's wing is and the Orderer too. How is He? What is He?

"We judge every being from brute to God by its quality of action. Now the world's order is clearly superhuman, unless we hold that man can make a new violet or a constellation as good as any one. Dynamically at least, and in His quality of work, this Orderer then is not human. Suppose by way of argument we venture to call Him Divine. Our clever man says, 'That means nothing. God, if there be one worthy of worship, must be perfect in all His attributes.'

"Certainly, that is what the Church has always said.

“‘But His world, if it be His,’ he retorts, ‘is full of defect and flaw, mildew, pestilence, tornado, earthquake, not to speak of lives a span long, rickety infants, consumptives, lepers, and the foul family of crime. What sort of a being ethically is your God?’

“I answer — if men would only be as sure of what they don’t know as of what they do, this wrangle against God would soon begin to end. The origin of evil I don’t know, and I never met the man who did. But I ask, if in this world we find so much well done for man, such care, foresight, wisdom, tenderness, if it be not more reasonable to believe that the things which seem evil are only veils of good, than to think that the Power of Mercy, which gives the wine and corn of life, contradicts Himself in mildew and cancer? Human reason is indeed fallible, either as affirming or denying God, but such as it is, as man’s history shows, it has been generally on the side of a God. The few who cross the trend of a whole race should at least be modest in their premises.”

“You claim, then, that the presumption of reason is on the side of a God?”

“I certainly do; and as I am made I cannot see it any other way. And you will notice that so far I have said nothing of the Bible argument in favor of God. Whatever any man may take the Bible to be, no sane man can deny that it asserts

the fact of God. It even goes farther and assumes the fact of God as a fact not to be questioned, and lying at the base of all its religion and ethics. It is indeed the history of God's dealings with men and a statement of their duties to Him; and in its theme of Christ, running as that theme does through its elder books down to the latest lines, it declares our salvation through the Son of God. No fact in literature is plainer.

“Of course, the force of this Bible argument depends on the credibility of the Book itself. The Church says it is the very word of God, and on my ground I must and do accept it as that. But exactly how, and in what, it is God's word (as, for instance, whether, when Isaiah had two words at hand to express an idea, he was inspired to take one and leave the other, or when another writer speaks of sunrise he is inspired to use a scientific statement and not merely a current form of speech, and in a thousand other things), the Church has never defined; and as I am not one of God's privy councillors, as some affect to be, neither do I. Authority must define, not my reason.

“Yet I suppose that every man holding as I do, under authority, has his own personal arguments to satisfy his own turn of mind. Let me state what mine are as to the word of God. I start out with the truism, not denied perhaps by any,

that the Bible is an effect. Reason teaches you and me that every effect must not only have a cause but an adequate cause. A river cannot flow from a wineglass. I start from here and read all those supreme books which great masses of men have revered,—Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Socrates, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Epic-tetus, and perhaps the Elder Edda of the Norsemen. These books complete perhaps the cycle of all that men, by themselves, have thought about religion and ethics, or man's duty to the Divine and to the human. Some of these books were written by men who lived in the very blaze of the foremost civilizations and culture of the world, and the oldest also. I find in these books sublime guesses at truth, often a thirst for it; sometimes a sweet and gentle charity, but no certainty. Take Socrates' plea for immortality in "Phædo" as an example of what I mean. I am very far from saying that many things in these books were not, in a certain sense, though not the Church sense, inspired; since from of old the Church of God has taught that He abides in the soul of every one.

"Then I turn from this secular reading to the Holy Oracles. First of all, I find that they declare themselves to be from God. Next I find that this Bible shows a coherency and a consistency in its religion and ethics not to be found in

those other books. That the Jewish Scriptures sometimes show a different temper from the Christian proves nothing against my statement, since the Bible itself declares that it is a history of the development of a world religion, from Adam to St. John, in which the old broadens and clarifies into the new. Next I find in the Bible a certainty and definiteness which are nowhere else; and these qualities too, on such questions as God, immortality, and the vexed matters of our mortal life. Whatever else it has, the Bible has no guesses, and it claims authority to be obeyed. Then I ask after the history of this book. Some man may tell me that Moses wrote into its first five books the learning of the Egyptian priesthood. But until the *savants* can show me from any or all the monuments of three thousand years of Egypt any doctrine of God as plainly stated as the Bible does, or any ethics as pure and lofty as the Ten Commandments, I shall take leave to say that the Bible cannot be from Egypt. But from whence, then? I find that it was mostly writ by a race of emancipated serfs, turned peasants, in a land of few monuments, little wealth, and still less culture.

“Now to my argument. The supreme minds of men, like Socrates and Plato, in supreme ages of culture, as seen in their writings, show the high-water mark of mere human thought. Yet in

those particulars which I have stated, and others also, the Bible outranks them all. And yet, mostly, it is the work of fishermen and peasants. Then I go back to my old law of adequate cause and effect. I say that achievement which is superhuman must be divine. But the divine is God. If the Bible is God's word, for me at least God is proved, and twice — by its source and by its substance. The Bible as it is, is and must always be its own best defence. After all this argument, be it good or bad, I wish to say, that what air is to my lungs, that God is to my soul, and more."

"From your standpoint, what would you say about any sort of future life?"

"I say that when you have proved God you have proved immortality. If there be a God, man must live beyond the grave — and for two reasons. First, God could never mock men by creating in them a hunger for immortality which he never meant to satisfy. Second, He would never create a human life so fragmentary and unfinished as this of ours, and not round and finish it with a higher future life. God, if He could wrong, would cease to be God at all. The Bible, as you are aware, assumes eternity no less than time to be man's birthright."

"And would you claim Christianity to be from God — the one religion of man?"

"Certainly. The Bible and the Church claim

for it nothing less. I need not state their arguments. But as I am talking, as man to man, you will let me say that Christianity proves itself divine from the superhuman completeness of its adaptations to the needs of man. A religion from God to man must be able to do its work, not half-way, but all ways. I confess that men have mis-moulded the Faith again and again; but the Faith is of the pattern once and forever made in the Mount of God. Christianity is able to satisfy humanity in its entirety, as no other religion can. Human religions recognize class, circumstance, or color. The Faith embraces a race, and is color-blind. Gibbon, in that famous Ninth Chapter of his History, gives diverse reasons why, in mere human ways, Christianity, as a new superstition, made its conquest so swiftly over the Roman Empire. The simple fact is, that Christianity conquered heathenism because, from serf to king, it was so curiously and minutely adapted to human needs. It was, and is, the one gate which opens to admit man into an eternal bliss. Wherever it has availed, it alone has changed the cry of the human from a wail to a pæan."

After thanks to the rector, Edward Vaughn took leave. The arguments had availed nothing with him. To the man with a film grown over his eyes, the landscape in the brightest sunshine is as though it were not. In spiritual things the film

over one's vision is from the soul. And in Edward Vaughn's dwelt darkness.

The evening of the day when Edward Vaughn held his interview with the rector, as has been told, he had occasion to go to Mother Walker's house to look up her son. It was some small matter about sailing the *Qui Vive* the next day which took him. As he went up stairs he heard a voice reading. It was a musical voice, a woman's — which he came speedily to apprehend was Lucy Farewell's. He had not seen much of that lady, lately, but had heard of her from some of the poor folk among whom she ministered. In fact, Mother Walker herself, on one occasion, had been loud in her praises to him. Therefore he was not much surprised to find her here. So he went up, quietly, nearer the reading. The door was open, and as he came to the landing he had a view of Mother Walker, in her white cap, sitting quietly, with her big son beside her, both intent on listening. The reader, a trifle aside the door, he could not see. The words read were those about the Good Shepherd and his sheepfold, and Edward Vaughn confessed to himself, as he listened, that they sounded like gracious ones, and no less so for the reading. So when the same voice after said, "Let us pray," and the son helped his mother to kneel down beside him, Edward Vaughn too went on his knees at the door out-

side. It was not exactly a logical act for him, perhaps, nor were his own devotions very fervent, if he had any; and yet it had some advantages. It brought him into a certain human relationship with those who prayed, and he was clearly not in his devout attitude to be seen of men. When the prayers ended, he knocked at the door—his human reverence, at least, for the rights of those who lived within. John Walker came at the knock, and with a pull at where his hat usually was, asked him in.

“So you keep church here, Mother,” he said in a good-natured way; “and Miss Farewell is the parson. This neighborhood has need enough of a church or something else to keep it straight; and I am sure that most of us are quite ready to accept a young lady’s orders” (with a bow to Lucy). That lady suggested in a very modest way that if things needed righting in the neighborhood, Mr. Vaughn in his position had both time and ability to do the needed work.

“I may have some of the physical elements necessary for a missionary,” he said, laughing, “but I sadly lack grace. In fact, I should like to have a couple of missionaries to take my own case in hand. Heathenism is often very acute in a Christian land, and with less surface has more depth. Some of us are very wells of barbarism. I believe in home missions.”

“But every one should do thier part to make things better.”

“True, and charity begins at home. But if I were to go round here on a mission (supposing I were thought fit) I should certainly behave in a very uncanonical way, provided I had the power. I would put, for instance, every mother who wouldn't keep her children's faces clean under a shower-bath until she would; pump every drunken father full of river water until he gave up his dram; flog every shop-man who gives short weight and measure with his own yardstick, sitting in a bushel basket until he promised better; tag every woman gossip with a big G, and if she wore a flower-garden on her hat, I would force her to lug round a cabbage head for a bouquet, until she would agree to better taste;—in fact I would sweep away social cobwebs and dust-heaps generally.”

“But would all that make them Christians, Mr. Vaughn?”

“Perhaps not. In fact no. But it would clean up a little for religion when it came. I have always had a sympathy for those Hebrew prophets who went round making things uncomfortable for time-serving kings and mean folk generally; rough reformers in raiment of camels'-hair and leathern girdles, and as free and unconventional in their behaviors as the wind or the rain it

drives before it. They were not men who lived in a glass house — nor a house of any kind for that matter. I do. But I should hugely enjoy throwing stones about — perhaps at my own windows first to get my hand in. Anyhow, speaking of stones, I notice in the city they tear up the pavement in order to lay down a better street. The litter of repair may baulk my carriage, but I get at last a better thoroughfare. I am just now a destructive Christian, sadly in need of mending; and am not at all sure that I have any mission except to eat my dinner and talk random nonsense.”

All this indeed was an unknown tongue to the simple folk in whose house he was, and worse than that to Lucy Farewell, whose more sensitive nature felt as if a cold wind were blowing across it. So by the consent of every one the conversation speedily took a turn towards simpler matters, and ended with kind words well taken.

“Tell the gardener to-morrow, John, that you are to have your winter vegetables off the place.”

“Yes, thank ye, Mr. Vaughn.”

So when Lucy Farewell rose to go, and John had gone to the closet (and Mother Walker at his heels) to light his lantern and show Lucy home, as he used at her visits, Edward Vaughn said, “I have known ladies of leisure take to works of charity, as their more fashionable sisters take

to opera or dance or dinner, as a way of getting through the day and a sort of mental dissipation agreeable to their make-up. But I know you have plenty to do in your school, and I often wonder, when I hear of you, what induces you to spend your time among poor folks."

"To try and be a little like my Lord," she answered simply.

"And why, allow me to ask, do you pray?"

"Because," she said after a pause, "because I am made so, as I am made to breathe."

"And have you ever thought of the arguments for prayer?"

"Never, no more than I should of the arguments for my existence. It is a part of life to pray."

"What would you say of a man who never prayed?"

"I should think him unworthy of his name."

"Thank you."

And John Walker came with his lantern to show the lady home. Edward Vaughn sauntered listlessly down to the wharf where the *Qui Vive* lay, watching the swinging light as it went up the river, and after, the black tide setting down.

"There is no light in any of their arguments," he said. "And yet—" And yet, in the act of an educated and honest woman like Lucy Farewell kneeling down on a rough floor among the poor

to pray, there had somehow been something which warmed his soul, warmed it not indeed to any passion of serving man or God, but so that it stirred as if to recognize itself and to make ready. Such motion is indeed life in its germ.

This of course he did not know, and therefore did not confess. But in this world of heresy a true word or act is always orthodox. The world, at its peril may answer as it may please to dogma; but it cannot answer, except to reverence, women kneeling in the hovels; nursing the sick in hospitals; touching the leprosy of sin to wash it clean with their own purity; and all in the name of Him who went about doing good. In the days now upon us, which will abide late into the future, creeds must be accredited to men by deeds. Our heathenisms of head and heart must be healed by the ointment of Christian lives. The Light of the world upon that cross which is at once His throne and altar must be defended by the smile of His own charity shining in the face of His.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CHRISTMAS TIDE.

THE Advent season had come and gone, bringing tidings of an approaching joy. Yet Nature gave no sign, in her lengthening nights and stronger cold, of her Lord's Nativity. The leaves that smiled in the sunshine paled in the frost, and the very sun moved slower as if benumbed. Autumn with her grays blanched into white winter whose snow seemed to shroud the dead. The life of Aubrey folk in these days was lapsing also somewhere, but with no incident that affects this story. Edward Vaughn had his darkness and the rest their work afield or indoors.

But now a new Christmas had come to this old world, which put on, as it were, its wedding garments. There was wrought indeed no change in tide, hill, or star, yet the inner eye saw a new halo on each. Christendom, at least, was gathered about a cradle.

Christmas tide always ran strong and full in St. Clement's church. There had been for the week past the usual litter and labor with the Christmas greens. Sturdy farmers had brought, in ox-carts

from their wood-lots, loads of boughs and young trees; there had been the common chatter and altercation over the tying of the greens and their placing; young ladies had pricked their fingers with the hemlock needles, and blushed a score of times when their deft fingers failed to tie the knot of a string much too short, while their swains held up the wreaths; ladders had been set and climbed until, at nightfall, the whole house seemed weary in the shadows, as the toilers went home; and there had been, in fine, the usual medley of the Christmas decoration of St. Clement's.

It was now Christmas Eve, and the children of the parish were to have, to-night, their Christmas tree and presents in the church basement. Lucy Farewell arranged the ceremony. So before early dark the room swarmed with the little ones, eager and noisy as at such times children are, and many a little girl's starched calico had been rumpled by the careless small boys in cowhide boots and jackets buttoned to the throat, in a room, which, at such times, seemed unreasonably hot; boys who were sure to get in everybody's way, and more than they deserved, to boot. Indeed, the tumult hardly ended when the rector came in, smiling, and with an occasional finger of warning to the more uneasy. A few words to explain the festival were to be spoken before the Christmas tree was lighted and the presents given, for the

plain reason that a crowd of children like these were never known to listen to any eloquence of man or woman afterwards.

So the rector explained what Christmas was, and afterwards the tree was lighted. It was soon ablaze with candles, but such little ones, and so savoring of anything but Roman incense as they were snuffed out, that the most ultra-Protestant took no offence. Then the presents were handed round, as the names were called, and several failed to be satisfied with what they got. The rest soon bestowed their new riches in their pockets or their stomachs.

The Christmas tree itself had been sent over by Edward Vaughn, and John Walker had assisted at its furnishing all that afternoon. The former had come in late to the ceremony, and now stood watching it from the back part of the room. So when the tree was quite stripped of presents, and the tapers well-nigh out, and somebody's bright eyes had discovered a solitary white envelope nigh the top, it was John who was called on to bring down the same. This he managed to do by the aid of a pair of high steps, while the small boys watched him climbing in sailor fashion, and brought the envelope to the rector. "This," said the latter, looking at the inscription, "is for Miss Lucy Farewell;" and a clapping of hands testified to that young lady's popularity. She came

forward and took her present, or whatever it might be. Then she went back to her place among the scholars, two eyes at least watching her every movement. Then she broke the wax seal, and, as the restless urchins round her allowed, looked inside. If one could have seen the face below the bent head, he would have seen alarm and even vexation. But she very deliberately put the letter in her pocket. Shortly the merry, noisy children went trooping out, while their elders were left to sigh over the toil it would take to clear away the litter. When Lucy Farewell made ready to go, well muffled up against the night air, Edward Vaughn was standing with his back to her talking with his man at the tree. It was an impulse, almost, but she went to him and laid her hand upon his arm.

"I wish very much to speak with you a moment."

"Certainly. Now?"

"Not here; but if you will walk with me towards Miss Kendrick's, across the Common, I will explain."

"By all means."

The children's merry voices were ringing down the street in the crisp winter air, and there was a flood of moonlight on the white snow. She said, when they were rid of the straggling youngsters,

"I wish to hand you back this," and she gave him out of her muff the envelope which had come to her from the Christmas tree.

"Me? Ah! yes; what is it? May I examine?"

So he stopped short in the snow, and very deliberately proceeded to examine its contents by moonlight.

"Yes; here are bank bills—new ones; one or two big ones, but pray tell me what have I to do with them? You certainly don't want to make me a Christmas present at this late hour. Besides, I am not at present in need of money."

"I am sure that this money came some way from you, and I wish to give it back."

"Ah! that's the trouble, is it? Will you do me the honor to tell me how you know all that?"

"Because no one else would give so large a sum, and the envelope was sealed with wax, which our townspeople are not used to do. Besides, I feel that somehow this money came from you."

"Bravo! my little lady. And do you think that judge or jury would convict me on that evidence? I don't see any handwriting here."

"There is none except on the envelope."

"Ah! yes; but I tell you on my honor that handwriting is not mine." (He was right in that.) "Do you know my writing?"

"No; but I know that this money came from you, and I wish to give it back."

"Now, be reasonable, Miss Farewell. You know the old saw, 'A woman convinced against her will is of the same opinion still.' You have no fair reason to think I sent this money."

"I ask you, then, as a gentleman, didn't you send it?"

"And I reply, as a gentleman, that I decline to answer any such question. For if I sent that money anonymously, I did not mean to own it; and if I should deny I sent it, you would only trouble yourself to hunt up some other poor fellow to bring him to confession. I must decline to answer."

"And I must decline to receive your money."

"What! will you force me to take money which is not mine? I know that you are kind to the poor, but I am no pauper, at least so far as bank bills go, and you certainly won't force me to take alms from you, will you? Here, take it back," and he held out the envelope with its enclosure to her.

But both hands went deeper into the little muff, as she said, "I cannot do that, Mr. Vaughn."

"Cannot, cannot" (with a vexed air almost of anger).

"Well, then, take it back, and throw it on the snow, or give it to the poor, as you like. Only don't make me hold this miserable package in this sort of quarrel."

But the gallant little lady, hands in muff, stood her ground, and made no motion of assent.

"Will you do as I ask you?"

"No, sir. I cannot take that money."

"Why not?"

"Because I ought not."

"What a deal of trouble conscience makes in this world, especially when it goes askew."

The little lady looked at him with two very full black eyes, and steadily.

"If your sister were in my place here, you would despise her if she did anything else than what I am doing now. That money is not mine. I am sure it is yours. I will have nothing to do with it any further. You yourself will come to see that I am right in saying so."

And the little lady's right foot motioned to go home.

So Edward Vaughn crammed the miserable little missive into his pocket with a shrug of intense disgust, and prepared to attend.

All further conversation took place at Miss Mary's door:

"Good night."

"Good night, Mr. Vaughn."

Even he confessed it was a sweet voice that answered.

Edward Vaughn went home, singing no pæan. Otherwise he was the slave of his own disgust.

He had half a mind to fling the envelope into the fire, but did not. He had been wont to find in woman acquiescence. And Lucy Farewell's victory nettled him. The atmosphere of her woman's honor, so intangible and yet so valid, had availed against his iron will.

In the poor box of St. Clement's shortly after was found a roll of new bank bills which surprised the rector.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WATER AGAIN.

CHRISTMAS had gone, and also the Epiphany or Feast of Light to us Gentiles, while the New Year lay pallid in the rime of midwinter. The snow covered deep among the pines, and the ice thickened and rumbled in its hoar rage until it had chained down all the rivers.

At this season Aubrey folk used to hold high carnival upon the ice, and turned the river below their town into a racecourse, especially on Saturday afternoons. There also the skaters, men and women, turned out in force. The Saturday of our present story the crowd was more than usual; and the pokey nags and high breds of the town ran queer races up and down the ice, while their owners sat in their comfortable sleighs and held hard the reins. Every one seemed in high spirits, even to the motley pack of curs who got under everybody's heels, except the horses'. Even Granny Little was on the ice, to beg. So also was Edward Vaughn and Lucy Farewell — both skating. John Walker was in his ice-boat, like the old sailor he was, making voyages along the

edges of the crowd or into the far regions of the gray ice-stretches down the river. For the illumination of those who dwell in less arctic regions than Aubrey Parish, it may be noted that an ice-boat is very much like any other rough skiff or flat boat with a sail; only it is set on a low wooden frame, sprawling out on either side, with its ends resting by the aid of stout, steel points upon the ice. The rudder has also its steel point for guidance, and the rigging is the common one of all small water craft.

The ice frolic had worn away to the late afternoon, and the gray, pulseless sunshine from the slanting sun shone frigidly through the stripped oaks on the hill ranges. The bustling, merry crowd still hung well together up the river, and the youngsters had already built their straggling wood fires on the ice at which to warm their fingers and watch the ascending smoke, column-like, in the thin air, when Edward Vaughn, who was at leisure, came to notice a lady skating alone and down the river. The distance only showed a trim, petite figure in black; but he knew it very well. He had not affected that lady's company to-day, neither did he proceed to do so now. Only he disengaged himself from the crowd and very leisurely skated off in her direction, with nothing to do and only a trifle curious to know where she was going. He had learned that river well in the

Qui Vive, and where its currents must run under the ice. So he skated on. The lady in black was nearing the Point of Rocks where the hills pushed the waters together in swifter flow. But the ice was no doubt thick there — a foot at least. So there was no danger. He took a look round him a moment as he skated, at the crowd above, and then at the sun to see how late it was. But when he looked down-stream again the little lady had vanished. The gray ice reaching far down to the pines showed no human form upon it. Good God! Had she gone through the ice? Yes; a thousand to one she had. He flung himself forward upon his skates with the energy of a man ready. Seconds counted as ages in his eagerness to do. On, on, with teeth hard set and white face, swifter — swifter, — with life and death in his stride, he mastered distance, and was approaching. Yes, there, low down, close to the gray ice, a woman's head — yes, two hands clinging to the ice edge. And between him and her just a rift of black water, eddying, cold, cruel — and he saw the gates of death wide open. Swift as an arrow, steady-handed, open-eyed, as men of the forlorn hope break into the breach of flame, so Edward Vaughn flung himself into the tide, and the gates of death closed round him. In a moment his left arm was well round her, and his right held to the ice. "Do not clutch me. It is death

to both," were the only words spoken. It was speedy death to both as they were, and he knew it. The ice was thin, and worn by the stream — a mere crust — where Lucy Farewell went in; and in his rage to live he now broke with his hand of flesh the ice, until its thickness stayed him. And the black, remorseless tide was ever dragging down and under.

Had the end come? Then let it come and be welcome. What had life been to him that he should care or quarrel at the something or nothing beyond? Yet he would have saved the woman. Why? In atonement for something? Perhaps, or to show himself, as he passed, that he had had in him a spark of something better than he had showed to man.

Men die by the fireside in quiet sleep; men live after the fire, the flood, the dagger. The East calls the decision between life and death, Fate; the West, as better taught in God, calls it Providence.

For John Walker, in his ice-boat, had followed leisurely his master as he had gone down the river, and had seen him disappear, as it looked, under the ice. And he too was a man and human, and must be brief if he would save. He had the wind quartering, and he sheeted hard home his sail and drove on. He stood up, hand on main sheet and rudder, and bending forward

measured his distances to make ready. What ages men live in such supreme moments! Nearer, nearer, a black mass in the water, two of them,—and their fate lay in one man's hand and eye. If he drove straight down to them he would only push them under, and if he broke in above them the tide would set him down upon them in like disaster. So with a curving sweep of his boat, which his soul measured, he drove round them down-stream, swift as the wind, and into the wind's eye, letting go his mainsail on a run, until the boat's headway brought her close to the edge where the two black masses stayed themselves.

Then John Walker bent steady over the boat side and seized the poor hand clutching at the ice. And then, as God willed and man wrought, two human creatures, man and woman, came forth from the gates of death and were helped on board. Edward Vaughn had yet his voice and his brain, and still meant to live and save.

"Take off your coat and wrap it round her," he said. It was done.

"Now give me your sheath knife; quick, man." He cut off his skates, and hers also, covering the feet with the only bit of canvas at hand. Then he sprung to the boat's bow, and, holding by the mast, searched the situation. Over the snow on the hillside he saw men running,—woodchoppers

who had seen the danger and were coming. Ah, God, if it should be too late !

“Forward here, man, help me unship this mast. Throw it over the side towards the shore, sail and all. It is death in this boat, death to the woman there. Be quick.” So the mast fell on the ice with a crash.

The men from the shore were approaching. “Bring all the fence rails you can find ; the ice is thin ; bring them quick.” So the men, a half a dozen or so, came tumbling down, fence rails in hand. “Quick ! lay them on that sail,” he shouted ; “make a bridge !” So they laid them. “Now, some man of you that dares, come over and take this woman.” One came out with care, and Edward Vaughn went back and lifted Lucy Farewell, unspeaking still, over the boat’s side to the man, who carried her ashore.

“Leave this boat ; come ashore, quick.” And he leaped upon the bridge and followed the man with his burden. The rough-handed, soft-hearted farmers, Farmer Jones’s people from Blackberry Hollow, were ready with their advices and assistance. “Have you got a buffalo robe anywhere ? ”

“One in that ere wagon yonder, Squire.”

“Bring it and cover her with it and take her home as fast as your horse can carry you. Mind, it is death if you are slow.”

So Lucy Farewell was covered in the huge, shaggy robe and carried home. "Come, man, let us go." One offered him a coat. "No," he answered hoarsely, "thanks, but I shall pull through in this," tugging fiercely at his sodden clothes. "I was not made to die by water. Let us run, man, to keep alive in this cursed frost."

To the astonished servant who opened the door at River Nook he said almost fiercely, "Give me — some brandy, quick!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SISTER OF MERCY.

CURIOUSLY enough, the water spared Lucy Farewell while it smote Edward Vaughn. The next morning he woke with a raging fever, which by noontime brought delirium. The doctor, who came shuffling in in haste, after watching his patient a little while as the paroxysms of pain came and went and he grew more violent, shook his head ominously.

"The brain is in danger," he said to the attendants, "and what besides it is too soon to say. In his present state you must have at least two good men at hand, night and day, to watch him. He may try to do almost anything—leave the house, for instance, which will be death,—or use violence. Who is here to take charge of him?"

"I will try, sir," said John Walker, who had kept by his master ever since the delirium. "It's hard for a brave man to die this way, Doctor."

"Exactly. His life depends on your watch, my man. To-morrow I will see him again. He needs no medicine at present."

So Edward Vaughn passed into the fever, long and sore. Nor was the strong man in his deli-

rium easy to handle. He seemed, as he wandered, to be rehearsing events out of his past life, until the simple folk about him wondered, and sometimes cowered before the fury. At such times it was only John Walker's voice and touch which seemed to quiet. Him, in some vagary of his brain, the sick man seemed to take for some high-bred lady, so deferential and courteous was he to all he might suggest. So for long days and nights the fever and the delirium held, and his faithful watchman held too, sleeping at nights on the rug at his bedside. Then at last the fever left him, and his reason came back, and he was sinking. The doctors consulted. It had been rheumatic fever, they agreed, and might have touched the heart. At any rate, he could now move neither hand nor foot. If not death, there was danger of a lifelong paralysis of the whole muscular system. If the man's constitution was good, he might pull through; but if not,—the doctors shook their heads. So for days more he hung between life and death; and when the crisis passed, weak as a child, motionless almost as the dead, he knew he was to live.

The doctor, with his ruddy, smiling face, came in the morning after the change.

“Very much better, Mr. Vaughn, very much better. Let me feel the pulse. Yes, a slow pulse, but a little weak.”

"Doctor," he said in his languid way, "I am better; but it seems to me as if I could only move the muscles above my shoulders. The iron teeth have shut close on me. How long must I lie here?"

"That would be hard to say, Mr. Vaughn."

"I might lie here six months?"

"Yes."

"Or a year?"

"Yes."

"Or forever?"

"I wouldn't like to say that."

"But come now nearer, please, where I can see your face." The doctor came and bent over him.

"Now, Doctor, don't flinch, speak truth; tell me, am I a cripple for life?"

"I can't say."

"But what do you think?"

It was entirely unprofessional, in the good doctor's mind, to tell such plain truth to an invalid; but the plaintive eagerness of the maimed man before him wrought him to say frankly, "I fear you will be."

"Thank you, Doctor. But I shall live?"

"Oh, certainly! perhaps to a green old age; and perhaps," measuring his words, "I mean it is possible you may quite recover. There are some cases in the books which look that way."

"Now, Doctor, go and get some breakfast in the

dining-room. I am a thousand times obliged to you for telling me the fact." The doctor went for his coffee; and John Walker, who had heard all, and had just finished clearing out his two eyes with his coat-sleeve, came to the bedside.

"Can you turn me, John? I wish to look out of the window."

"Yes, master." And the strong arms went under him, moving gently as a mother's around her babe.

Edward Vaughn looked out of the window while the doctor ate breakfast. When the latter came back, he had fallen into a tranquil sleep.

So slowly Edward Vaughn came back to life. But it was a changed man, if not a better one, who confronted the same old world. In the wreck which he had suffered heretofore his superb physique had remained with him. Now that was gone also. His will, which in him, as in most of us, was made strong and dominant by his bodily energies, now missed its allies, and lay passive in him. All passion, too, fed as it is by the fumes of a man's physique, under his infirmity withdrew in a new reserve. It resulted hence that a new gentleness came over him, not ethical, but physical. Both brain and heart remained to him, but the vital fires burned low and tranquil in each; so that, to one watching the surface of his gentleness, he might seem a crescent saint. Yet he was only the old man in a new estate.

But where and how was Lucy Farewell all this while? When that young lady, wrapped in her buffalo robe, was carried in through Miss Mary Kendrick's front door by the two stalwart countrymen who came with her, Miss Mary stood aghast one single moment. Then her hands flew faster than even her tongue, and very soon quiet reigned at Lucy Farewell's bedside. The town, of course, was much moved at the accident; and when the doctor brought back word of Edward Vaughn's dangerous illness and his after-crippled state, not a few said kind things, and wished him well. The poor folk whom he had fed were especially outspoken; and one would either be forced to laugh or cry in telling how Granny Little, with her two goats, for several days besieged the back doors of River Nook, clamoring that warm goat's milk was sovereign remedy for fever, and that "the masther" inside was welcome to all she had. It was an offer not accepted, and no wise courtly, on its outside at least, but yet entitled to the ancient blessing of "a woman who hath done what she could." Mr. Ardenne, of course, had gone to River Nook, and lately had seen the convalescent several times.

Edward Vaughn had inquired of him about Lucy Farewell, and expressed a desire to see her. So a day was fixed for her to come over with the rector. When she stood with Mr. Ardenne upon

the verandah of River Nook, in that pause between the bell-pull and the opening door which so often has in it for us mortals so many omens of good or ill, the rector tried to put her on her guard.

"Mr. Vaughn is greatly changed," he said. "I suggest that you do not allow yourself to show surprise. Invalids are often very sensitive, you know."

"Yes, sir; I shall remember."

Lucy Farewell was not a beauty; her features were too small, and not all ways regular, according to Attic standards; but as she stood on that verandah, petite, modest, simply dressed in black, with the brown hair smooth over the forehead, and the liquid brown eyes below, and the pure round face with roses on the cheeks, she was certainly very charming.

The servant opened the door, and said, "Mr. Vaughn is in the library, and is expecting you. Please walk this way." John Walker was at his post by the library door as usual. The library itself was a good-sized room with the usual array of book-shelves and bronzes, an open fire at the upper end, and a profusion of cut flowers in the mantel vases. One side the fire the invalid lay on a lounge, and propped up with pillows. Lucy had taken the rector's offered arm at the door, and the two went down the room together.

"I have brought over with me the young lady I promised you," Mr. Ardenne said; and he felt the hand on his arm first tremble, and then clutch tight, as if to keep from falling. For Lucy Farewell saw a worn face rigid as marble, whose very smile had not strength enough to creep much below the eyes, and a form under the afghan robe as motionless as a draped statue of stone. A moment's silence, and then she went close, and bent over him.

"I have brought you these violets," she said. "I am very sorry you have been ill;" and she held out the flowers to him. There was no movement even of the head; but the voice out of the slow-moving lips said, "Pardon me, Miss Farewell: the water has chilled my manners. I thank you for them, but I regret that I cannot take them."

And she realized then how the man before her had turned to stone, almost all except his soul.

"Oh, never mind, then! I will put them in a vase where you can see them, and where your own beautiful flowers will not quite overshadow them." And she very deftly put them in a small vase on a table near him. Then she went back to him.

"I owe my life to you," she said simply, in a low voice. "I do not know how to thank you. I am so sorry that you have suffered so, — and to save me."

The marble statue did not move ; but a smile crept down and round the eyelids, while the mouth slowly shaped itself to its old-time grimness. "Ah, yes! the water was very cold, and I spoiled my suit for you ; but you didn't clutch,—that was death ; a brave little lady you were, only you go skating in slippery places, and your friends have to help you out of mischief. You were also a very submissive little lady at the river, and did everything I wished. If you only cultivate obedience, you will be quite a paragon among your sex." This side reference to Lucy Farewell's late wilfulness over the envelope and its enclosure on Christmas Eve that lady did not choose to recognize.

"I hope you will soon be in health again."

The lips of the statue closed tight again, and at last said slowly, "The doctor don't think so. He says I am likely to last this way a lifetime. It don't matter." (All this in a very impersonal tone, as though he spoke of some one else.)

"Oh, I can't believe that ! I am sure you will be better."

"Perhaps, but never mind that now. Your standing tires me. Will you be so kind as to bring a chair and sit where I can see you, so as I can see the fire yonder, an old friend of mine, so very cheerful ? I envy its free motion as I lie here."

So she brought a chair and set it as he wished.

"Yes," the motionless marble went on, while the smile flickered around the eyes, "a lady in black, with a white collar about her throat — antagonisms in dress or life are strong, you know; black you wore down the river — quite a Sister of Charity you are, especially as you are so obedient. Remember, please, you are to take me quite as you do the other sick folk I hear of your visiting. I shall expect you to come and see me as often as you do Mother Walker. There is no reason, is there, why a man with a bank account should fare worse at your hands than one who hasn't?"

"Why not let that all go till another time when you are stronger? and, as you are pleased to take me for a Sister of Charity, please tell me what I can do to make you more comfortable."

"Exactly what you are doing, — sitting in that chair where I can see you, and talking to me. Only you might call John Walker at the door there. My head is complaining of these pillows; and perhaps, if they had tongue, they would complain of my head, — in a cross-action, as the lawyers phrase it. Call John."

"Yes, but a Sister of Charity ought to do that herself. Let me try." And so with a woman's deftness she managed to smooth and arrange the pillows under the head of marble, to its liking.

"Thank you; that is much easier."

Then Mr. Ardenne, who had been amusing himself by looking over the stray books with their illustrations, on the tables, came round to the two.

"I suggest that our first call be not so long as to tire our friend. Perhaps we had better go now."

"But you must have lunch first. A good lunch is sure to fill out lean manners, and I am only a sorry host at best. The fact is, as I lie here I enjoy all life and motion more than ever; and it would be a comfort to see you eat lunch."

So the invalid's whim was gratified. The servants brought in lunch, which was served on the study table.

"Now, Miss Farewell, you must preside, and see that these men have put things right, and if they haven't, give your orders. No man, in my judgment, can ever learn to set a table." So Miss Lucy gave a few touches of her woman's skill to certain glass and napkins, and then sat down at the cheerful table, facing Edward Vaughn. But however bright it was at table, it was quite dreary-seeming in his corner, Lucy saw; so that after a little she could not refrain from saying, "But what are *you* going to have for lunch?"

"I? — well, just a trifle more of your society, and perhaps a glass of sherry."

"The sherry you shall have at once;" and she

brought a wine-glassful, and held it out to him -- forgetting. The shadow of that act fell upon the marble face, which now showed pain of the rigid and hopeless sort.

"Pardon, Miss Farewell. I am past drinking alone. Some Sister of Mercy must assist."

"Ah, yes! I see: such a patient child should be well cared for." So she brought a napkin from the table, and very gently tucked it about his throat, and then with a steady hand gave him his wine. Then she went back to her lunch, which soon concluded.

"I hope to see this Sister of Charity often come in with you through that door, Mr. Ardenne," the invalid said as his guests bade him good-by, "You both of you can do a deal of living for me, and just at present I can do the dying for the whole town. At least it feels so." And Edward Vaughn lived on, with the iron teeth of his fate shut tight upon him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

VICTORY comes late, or it comes laden.

There is a time, in the early spring of our temperate zone, when the earth shows exhausted by the frost in that profound sleep under its dead grasses from which no sun seems potent enough to wake it. It is the day before the coming of those Southron birds which make our forest music later on, when the ice-gorge dams up the rivers, and Nature, sere and pale, is waiting for something. It seems the world's three-days' grave-sleep before its resurrection.

The sun had brought Aubrey Parish so far towards the violets on the night of that day when Mr. Ardenne had been making his Lent calls on his parishioners. As he returned across the Common, late and tired, to the rectory, he stopped; it may be quite by an accident. Below him were the white houses of the town, dim in the darkness. Overhead were pale stars, while the swollen streams were moaning in the glen under the pines. He looked round the horizon in the cold night air. "Where is she?" his heart

asked, but there was no answer. The whole world seemed chill and sere to him; but his heart, where the fires of an old love burned, was yet warm.

He had asked that question a thousand times before, and with the same ill luck. Absence, sorrow, submission, above all his plighted word in Strasbourg Minster, had kept him at his post, and would do so to the end. Yet his estate was by no means easy, and at times his soul had risen up in a very storm of protest. Then it had gone back again to the halls of peace. Indeed, there were times (and these too, so far as could be made out in after days, the crises in Helen De Vere's life) when she seemed strangely near to him (so subtle is the psychology of souls), and when his heart rose up to greet the woman whom he knew was dwelling beyond the sea.

To-day the old tides of memory had been sweeping through his being. He had been restless, anxious, though nothing of disaster, of which he knew, had happened, and yet he came to the rectory depressed. Was it some demon who would rend before it finally came out of him? Or was it that morning shadow which deepens towards the sunrise? Even the ruddy, wanton fire, as it played among the oak logs on the library hearth, failed to cheer him. He lived and was at work among a human kind who honored him, and he served a

Master who gave rare wage; and yet to-night at least he felt himself alone in a wilderness without bound or end, and his heart hungered and bled for the society of one, and she absent and somewhere in the great wild. So he wearied himself with meditations until he fell asleep in his chair before the fire.

He must have slept long and deep, for the knocking at the rectory door was loud to wake him, and the embers had fallen black upon the hearth when he awoke. So he went to the door. "Who's there?"

"Farmer Jones's man from Blackberry Hollow."

The door was opened, and the man came in, swinging a huge lantern, and covered with mud.

"There's trouble at the Hollow, parson, and you're wanted. Stage-coach upset in the mud by the mill, and somebody's hurted; and I'm sent arter you post-haste. I hearn 'em say it is a woman hurted, and is carried to Farmer Jones's house."

The rector was used to sick calls, day or night; so he quickly put on his overcoat, and, with his stout walking-stick in hand, went out with the man into the chill. There was a reeking mist above ground, and the full river was raging as he passed through the covered bridge which crossed it, now trembling with its fury, while the March mud in the road was deep. It was a two-mile

walk to the Hollow. The man with the lantern went sturdily before him, pointing out the dry places, if there were any; and between the two they managed without ill fare to reach the house. Its lights loomed dim through the mist as they came up; and moving lights among the stables in the rear, and men's voices, showed something unusual going on in this generally quiet neighborhood.

Farmer Jones was not Mr. Ardenne's parishioner, but he gave him now a good, sturdy welcome, as of a man relieved by his coming. "Glad you've come, parson. Plenty of mischief in the Holler all this blessed night—stage upset, horse killed, driver broke his shoulder-blade, and a woman hurt—she's in t'other room there—and we've been up all night. Never knowed such a night at the Holler since I wor born."

"But who is the woman who is hurt?"

"Don't know, parson. They said they were friends of yourn,—t'other one said so—the older one."

"Friends of mine? I have no friends here except in the parish. How many of them are there?"

"Two, I guess—two women. They and the doctor are in t'other room. I'll go and tell 'em you've come."

So the kind, rough man hurried almost on tip-

toe across the hall, and tapped softly at the door, which was opened, and he whispered something. The rector was used to surprises, but somehow this whole business was setting the eyes of his mind wide open. Who would come through that door? First came out Farmer Jones's fat wife, on tiptoe; and behind her a little lady with hair white as the driven snow, and wearing something like a widow's cap over it, dressed in black, and with a little stoop, as she walked nervously behind the fat housewife towards Mr. Ardenne. Then she emerged from behind her screen, and went close up to him, holding out both hands, and looking up at the stalwart man before her.

"Do you know me, Mr. Ardenne?"

He took the hands in his, and looked; and as he looked, the sense crept over him that he did know her. After long absences it is the eyes which we first remember, because those mirrors of the soul are least veiled with the years. Yes, he knew them to be the eyes of Miss Hannah De Vere. Strong men do not faint usually, yet their blood can run back chill to the very heart-fount, and tremble in every pulse-throb, all the same. Between his recognition and his question was but a moment; yet in that instant his soul lived ages, wrapped in a flame of fear. "Blessed be God! You are Miss Hannah De Vere, but where is Helen?"

Miss Hannah, in all her personal misery, was keeping her habit of caring for the peace of others; and so now she tried to arrange her answer so as to least hurt the man before her.

“Ah! we were so near you, and then this dreadful accident. Helen is in the other room. She is hurt — the doctor hopes not much.”

Men have need to be very strong sometimes, as this man was, — strong with his years of suffering and submission. He had faced death calmly in hovel and mansion, when the hearts of others were breaking: why not when death, perhaps, was coming to his own? He said very quietly then: “You are among friends. We will do everything we can for you both. Where is the doctor?”

“In the other room with Helen.”

“Will you please send him out to me?”

“Yes; I will go and watch while he comes out.”

So the dear little lady, faithful through the weary years to her one charge in life, twice her daughter in the love she gave her, went, bent and slowly, back to the sick-room.

The doctor came out with a very professional air of solemn gravity, to be asked, —

“Can I see your patient? I wish it very much, if it won’t harm her.”

The doctor hesitated. “You know a sick-room as well as I, Mr. Ardenne. The fact is, I don’t

know whether it will do or not. It is a peculiar case. The shock of the accident has affected the lady's nervous system, and there may be danger to the brain. She is wandering now. What she needs is quiet: anything that would excite her would be bad. Your going in would be an experiment, anyway. Judge for yourself."

"Well, doctor, I will go." And the two went very quietly into the sick-room. It was but a few steps they had taken, yet, for one man, they were bridging over the all of his "had been" with the all of his "to be." The room itself was the same where the wedding of Farmer Jones's daughter had been, as heretofore described; and on one side of it, as seen by the dim light of the oil lamps, the patient was lying on a low lounge, dressed in her travelling suit, just as she had been brought in from the accident.

The two men walked noiselessly across the room to where Miss Hannah sat watching; and the minister bent down his head and looked,—looked without words and with his soul. The face was flushed, and the eyes wandered, and the years had made more matronly; but, living or dying, she was the same to him — his for ever and ever.

The brown hair he knew, and the taper fingers of the little hand, as it lay so restless and yet aimless on the travelling shawl which covered her. He took that hand in his and knelt low down

beside her. Was the cup at the lip to be shattered after all? Would the tide bear her across a wider sea than that which she had crossed to him? Was it the sunset behind clouds, with the chill night covering forever? Then he prayed as a strong man does, not as when his ship goes down in the last plunge, but as when his very soul seems falling in ruins, and yet knows that it cannot cease to be—prayed, not that his own will, but that Better Will, might be done on earth as it is in heaven, even if the bitter cup did not pass. Then, after a while, he spoke to her and called her by her name. The wandering eyes opened wider, and looked an instant at him, and then relapsed into the old uncertainty. But one thing was plain,—his presence there was soothing her: she grew more quiet. Yet occasionally her wandering mind spoke words. He bent over close to her, and listened. So far as the words cohered, they seemed to be about her present journey. He caught the broken sentences: “The way is so long—they stay so late—and he expects us. Is it to-morrow that we shall come home?”

He bent forward, and kissed reverently the flushed forehead. The last kiss before had been in a Chester churchyard. Then he bent still lower, and with his mouth to her ear spoke low and gently: “Peace, my child! you have come home. I am Frederic Ardenne; you are my own

dear wife whom God gave me. I am here beside you. You are safe at last."

The hands were actually growing quiet; and the eyes, closing themselves, ceased to wander. She even seemed to be listening — to the voice at least, if not the words.

Then he went on: "There was once a poor child in Chester Close, who loved a man who loved her. And then evil things parted them; yet they had promised each other to be true and strong, and God heard them. Then she went away — far off to strange lands; and he stayed and waited — long, long years; waited and toiled and prayed. And now she has come back to him, and he is telling her the old, old story, and she is listening to his voice; and God is hearing his prayers for her; and she must be quiet and sleep."

She was now certainly listening. Even the doctor, with some big tears in his eyes, wondered at the man's singular power to soothe that wandering intellect. She turned her face to his, and looked — a steady look; and as she looked, a faint, conscious smile, sweet, pure as an angel's, suffused her whole face. Reason had come back to its throne again. Thanks be to God!

Then he kissed her again, and said, "You must go to sleep now, my child."

There was no answer, but the little hand in his pressed his in a silent recognition. Then, gently

as a woman, he smoothed with his hand again and again the brown hair over the forehead, until she fell into a deep, gentle sleep.

He left her, with Miss Hannah watching.

"The danger is past," the doctor said. "You have done more than medicine. You should turn doctor, parson."

"Tell the elder lady, Mr. Jones," Mr. Ardenne said as he went away, "I shall come as early as I can this morning, and you must keep the house very quiet. Any noise is dangerous to the sick person."

"I will do that thing, parson. Not a cock shall crow if I can help it."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MISS MARY KENDRICK.

WHEN Helen De Vere woke from her long sleep it was late morning. She looked round Farmer Jones's quaint, rambling best room with its litter of would-be finery, and said to the patient watcher beside her,

"Where am I, Auntie?"

"Safe in Aubrey Parish, my dear."

"Has there been an accident?"

"Yes, my dear; and you were brought into this house close by, where you now are quite yourself again."

Helen seemed to fall into thought a little and then said, "Auntie, I had such a beautiful dream. I thought Mr. Ardenne was here, and kissed me — I feel it now,—and told me about Chester and our old life there, and bade me go to sleep. Is it not curious, Auntie?"

"Mr. Ardenne has been here, my child."

"What! in this very room?"

"Yes."

"And has seen me?"

"Yes."

"And I didn't know it, but thought I dreamed. Where is he, Auntie?"

"Gone home. He will come back by and by, and will, no doubt, see you if you are strong enough to endure the excitement. The doctor says we must keep you very quiet."

"Oh, Auntie! I am quite myself again. Did he say 'this morning?'"

"Yes, my child."

Meanwhile Mr. Ardenne was at his work. No king after the victory of a new crown ever went back to his tents with a more bounding energy of triumph than he strode through the March mud of the lane which led from Blackberry Hollow to the rectory. He had seen *her*. And he had work on his hands too. He, who had spent his life caring for others, would now take good heed to his own. The old military blood in him rose to decide. They could not come to the rectory for reasons. Where then? The one house in the parish where he would ask admission was Miss Mary Kendrick's. So that lady was much surprised, at a rather early morning hour, by the vigorous clamor of the bright, brass knocker on her front door. Then, with a muttered ejaculation against people so unreasonable as to go round disturbing their peaceful neighbors at such a heathenish time of day, she came down in a wrapper, and opened the door to let in Mr. Ardenne.

"Why, parson! is my house afire, or your cook dead, that you are up so early?"

"Nothing of the sort. . But let me come in, and I will tell you."

"You may come in if you like, but there's not a fire lighted in my house; you'll get a cold welcome. You may as well come into the parlor."

"Now, then, Miss Mary," he said when she had located him in that best of her rooms, standing up in his overcoat for the cold, "I have often asked you favors for others, and now I want a favor for myself."

- "What is it, parson?"

"This. Strange things have happened in this parish since the sun went down. A lady to whom I was long ago engaged to be married—an English lady with her aunt—was on her way to me, was thrown from the stage-coach, which broke down in Blackberry Hollow, and hurt,—I don't know how much. They are now at Farmer Jones's across the river, not exactly the place for them to stay. I want you to take them in as soon as they are able to move. Will you?"

Now, Miss Mary was not one of those desiccated maidens of Aubrey Parish who had fondly cherished the delusion that some day it would be their mission to be mistress in St. Clement's rectory, and so there were no personal regrets in the astonishment which her rector's words created

in her honest soul. Yet she meditated. It was about the condition of her house, and not his perturbation of mind, however. There had been no spring cleaning; and strangers, and women at that! What a challenge to any housekeeper, like her, it was! Miss Mary had a habit, when things were badly mixed, to begin at the hind end of affairs, and to veil her final "Yes" with several undoubted difficulties.

First of all she aired her astonishment.

"Well, I never would have thought it! I always supposed that you were a bachelor for life, and had taken some silly vow not to marry, and so make one more old maid to keep cats. My house is all to wrongs at present,—not a panel scoured this spring. I had rather have ten men, than one woman, living in my house. A woman is always mousing round to find cobwebs and discover a patch in the table-cloth, and all that. Men have something else to do. Besides, how can these English folk get along with me? How do I know what they'll want to eat and drink, or whether they dine at midnight? And this house is too old, to say nothing of its mistress, to learn new manners. But"—and here she took a long pause before coming to her conclusion—"but they can come, all the same, as soon as they like, and I'll do the best I can. Only they must put up with what they get. They'd better have the

two front rooms, I reckon; and there's plenty of beds up-stairs." Miss Mary had not only said "Yes," but was already beginning to carry it into effect.

"I knew your kind heart," Mr. Ardenne said, to her half-soliloquy. "I am going over to the Hollow as soon as possible, and may bring them here before dinner, if the young lady be strong enough to move."

"But now, parson, we are through business, I'd just like to know one thing,—not whether the lady's young and beautiful and charming; no man in your case is able to talk straight about all that; but I'd just like to know her name, so that she'll not be quite a ghost to me when she comes over."

"Helen De Vere."

"Well, now, that's a sweet name, and sounds as though it came out of a castle. I am sure I shall fall in love with her at sight."

"Thank you, Miss Mary. She is a lady."

Then the rector left the house to care for his own, further. Somewhat later he went over in a hackney coach to the Hollow. On his way he met the doctor coming back. The latter stopped his gig, and, rubbing his huge fur mittens together in a sort of medical self-gratulation, said, "Your patient is quite herself again. The quickest out of a bad business I have ever seen in all my prac-

tice. She was very hungry, and called for breakfast, I hear. Never saw a case like it."

"When can she be moved without danger?"

"Oh, any time! to-day if you like. Good-morning." So the rector rode on with a glad heart to Farmer Jones's. Miss Hannah came out into the hall with a new vivacity, less bent than the night before. She told the same story. Wonderful—Helen was up and dressed, quite in health again. "She is expecting you."

Then they two passed into Farmer Jones's parlor. The young woman who now rose from her chair to meet him was stately, patient, gentle; and the eyes were steady, looking in his face. And then?—There are moments of ecstasy in this life of ours which no mortal poet can sing in words, or limner paint in colors. That power, perhaps, is reserved for another world where progress in high art has no limit.

There were many things said in a very quiet way between the three. Miss Hannah herself was given to details, and was of an inquiring mind. Amongst other things she asked, "Do they fry everything in this country? The steak was fried this morning."

The rector laughed. "Nearly everything, among the country folk," he said. "I am sorry if you made a poor first breakfast in my parish. There are three things which an old traveller can call

for in this, or almost any country, which are sure to be clean, — boiled eggs, potatoes baked in their jackets, and milk perhaps. But come, now; I have a carriage at the door, and have found a home for you near me. I will tell you the rest as we are going.”

“How very kind; and so soon! How happy we are, Auntie!”

So their travelling-packs were soon collected, and they went. Miss Hannah had a quiet altercation with Farmer Jones in the hall-way over a couple of broad pieces of gold which she offered and he vigorously declined. Her woman's will won, however; and while he was inspecting the curious legend stamped upon the British coin his guests drove away.

They had rather a warm reception at Miss Mary's when they got there. First of all, that housewife had opened all the blinds of her two front rooms, to let in as much of the sunshine straggling round the parish as chose to enter. Next, it looked as though she had built a blazing wood fire in every fireplace of the house, to make things cheerful; and when she stood on her front doorstep to receive her guests, her very wig seemed to shed down a welcome. “The parson's friends are mine,” she said, as she shook hands with a vigor which surprised the muscles of poor Miss Hannah's right arm. “Glad to see you, as if

I had been expecting you both a six-month." So the warm-hearted hostess went bustling round, and her guests were soon ensconced in their comfortable quarters. Helen she seemed to take for her god-daughter; and as for Miss Hannah De Vere, when she heard of her last night's vigils, she insisted that she should take a big dose of sleep forthwith. In fact, that lady just escaped being put to bed perforce. Then she proceeded to ask after their trunks. They were on their way, and ought to reach there this very afternoon. Mr. Ardenne was going to look after them. Then she excused herself, to look after dinner; and the rector said to her at the door as he went away, "Of course, this coming of our friends will make a deal of talk in the parish. Just say, please, if people ask you, exactly what I told you this morning about them."

"Yes, parson, some folks in this parish would split if they couldn't talk; and I sometimes wish they couldn't. But I'm sure every one, almost, will rejoice with you, Lent or no Lent. I'd like to see anybody come round here finding fault! They'd go off with a flea in their ear, I can tell you."

Mr. Ardenne was a busy man all that day, but the new joy welling forth in his heart like a strong tide overswept and full filled everything. Aubrey Parish had become a palace, and he was a king

in his happiness. It had been before a palace where he had served his King, and now the King had blessed him with a full store.

It seemed but moments when St. Clement's bells rang for evening prayer. But there were other ears to-night, in the parish, to hear their invitation.

"What are those bells, Miss Kendrick?" Helen asked.

"That is evening prayer, my dear."

"I think I am strong enough to go, Auntie."

"Yes, my dear;" and in due time three ladies out of Miss Mary's house were walking across the Common to St. Clement's. The congregation was sparse to-night, so busy are even Church folk with this world, while they neglect the next, and the pews looked bare and cold as they came in. In other lands two had worshipped where age had sanctified and opened wide its stored hand to beautify, and here everything was so new and plain. But his voice was reading the old prayers, after all that had been, here at his post, and they were home at last. It was to them the one service over all the globe; and the Faith, older than they, had travelled before them to the West.

They waited after service for the rector, who walked back with them to Miss Mary's, where he was to take his tea. And after, in Miss Mary's parlor, before the cheerful fire, they talked of the

old Chester days, when they, all three, were younger. "Some time I will tell you of our life on the Continent," Helen said. "I am not quite fit to-night;" and a half-shudder showed itself, as though there was just a trifle of pain in her heart somewhere.

Miss Hannah had evidently been making good use of her eyes since she came into her new home. While Miss Mary was out a while, on her mission of next day's breakfast, Miss Hannah said: "Your parishioner, Mr. Ardenne, strikes me as a great novelty. I have never seen one like her in England. She takes care of her own house, which is as clean as if there was no such thing as dust, and yet she has a pile of magazines and new books on her table here. She is free of speech and self-respecting, and yet shows a wonderful faculty for work—the energy of half a dozen women about her house; and she has some fine old silver, and such a store of linen. She strikes me a little like our own English country people, only with a French vivacity to her, somehow. Pray tell me what she is, exactly, in this American life of yours."

"Oh!" he said, laughing, "she is an American citizen; and here every one is a king or queen, as the case may be. This parish was settled by Oliver Cromwell's people—good, sturdy, wilful English country folk, and London tradesmen in

a small way. Climate and education have given them, as you say, a French tinge to their manners. But at bottom they are Old England — as some of the furniture in this very room shows.”

The rector went home in the early evening, for Miss Mary allowed no late hours in her house. She showed him to the door.

“Have the trunks come, Miss Mary?”

“Trunks! A cart-load of them. It’s lucky I had a garret. I should think they had brought all their furniture in them.”

Then she, too, had a word of criticism: “If every English girl is such a blessed one as this here, I’m sorry I’m not a man to go and marry one at sight. The aunt is a little stiff.”

CHAPTER XL.

AN INVASION OF THE RECTORY.

MEANWHILE rumors about the new arrivals in Aubrey Parish multiplied themselves in an ever-increasing ratio. They ran all the way from two Indian princesses to two women come to town to sell goods by sample. This last report came from the simple remark of the man who hauled the trunks that there was enough in them by weight to set up a variety store. As this was a community given to trade, the latter rumor gained some credence; but Miss Mary, with divers emphatic shakes of her wig, soon set matters right, and it came to be known that the rector had had a windfall in the shape of two very old and dear friends out of England.

Nor should it pass without apology to the reader that in the last chapter Lucy Farewell was quite left out of the rejoicing. The fact is, that young lady's modesty was quite hid behind Miss Mary's bustle, and she ventured only the first day to mind her own affairs in a strict retirement. But very soon — in fact, sooner than this late apology — she had come to be on right good terms with the two

English women, especially with Helen. Indeed, they two were after the same pattern of Churchwomen, yet with a difference. Both were of that passive nature whose strength is in holding fast its inner mind loyal to duty, and an abstinence from any stormy forth-putting of its will towards any, —an atmosphere in calm. Yet Helen had the stronger will because she had known the bitterer struggle. Both were young, but Helen was the elder, not so much in years as in those wider experiences which had come to her in them, and in a civilization which was also older in its coloring. And both were daughters of that Church whose cultus of faith had colored their lives into a sweet simplicity and loyalty that had in it a singular strength to control. They two had become fast friends under Helen's headship.

It was already arranged that the wedding should be celebrated after Easter, and affairs went on accordingly. There were surprisingly few love passages between the rector and his betrothed in the days preceding, —at least few which would give stronger color to our story. Both Mr. Ardenne and Helen, in their years of separation, had travelled far into another world where there is no passion (not even of love) that pains; and they came back to each other bearing a great peace which this world can neither give nor take away. The river of their lives had been divided into two,

but now flowed on as one in a great, silent, blessed peace. Helen herself stated the case, perhaps better than any, in answer to Miss Mary's confidential remark one day to her that she had never met in all her life so sensible a pair of lovers.

"We are not exactly lovers, Miss Kendrick."

"What, then, in the world *are* you?" was that ancient maid's retort.

"We are — yes — we are two people who have so long loved each other that love has become a life, an estate, an old estate, so old that it has ceased to be a passion; it is an existence. I look at Mr. Ardenne through ten years of absence and what they brought us; and so I suppose he looks at me. We love one another, but we are not exactly lovers, Miss Mary."

"All the same, you are two very sensible people anyhow, and I wish you much joy to boot."

"Thank you."

Helen rather surprised the rector at his next visit with a request. "I wish you would take me with you, making parish calls."

"Do you really wish it?"

"Certainly I do. I am to live among this people, and I wish to learn their ways as soon as possible. Let me be Ruth, and say, 'Thy people are my people, and where thou dwellest I will dwell.'"

So next day the two went out making parish

calls on the poor. How proud of her he was, and how happy she showed as they went their round. The novel country and the houses surprised her most. "How new is everything!" she said; "and these white houses, they look like tents, as if the frost might drive through them. Our English houses are stronger built."

"Yet they are very comfortable, Helen; and the people in them are very self-respectful, nothing cringing, a little egotistic perhaps. I give you advice, although perhaps you don't need it. Never patronize them. The poorest men or women born here always put their best foot forward (as the phrase is), feel themselves quite our equals, and would be hurt if we treated them otherwise. The emigrants from Europe are different."

"You have forgot, or perhaps I never told you, that on the Continent I often went round with our clergy among the poor, and certainly there they are very different. I often used to think of you at such times, and wonder if you might not be doing the same thing somewhere in the great world. But how much happier it is going round with you, dear! We love God and all His more when we love one another, and I feel I can be happy here all my life."

The rector looked round upon the happy face beside him, and said nothing.

So they walked and chatted and visited together all that afternoon. When they came back to Miss Mary's, two were happy, and one was very tired.

As long as priests will marry, and women are found to wed with them, somebody must attend, some time, to very mundane and worldly matters. So it was concluded in secret conclave by the ladies at Miss Kendrick's that they must make a right thorough visitation and inspection of the rectory before the wedding. And Miss Mary announced the decision.

"We are coming over to the rectory to-morrow to begin to put things to rights before Easter. No man ever could take care of a house by himself; and that's one reason why the Lord sent Eve to Adam, though Adam did treat her very badly about the apple. We don't want you to interfere, or take any trouble, but only let us go round and see how things really are."

So next morning three ladies, Miss Kendrick ahead, stood on the rectory steps to find admission.

"Where will you begin your visitation," said the smiling rector, "up stairs or down?"

Miss Mary was spokesman. "Oh! we'll go to the kitchen first; there's where the happiness of a house begins, or its misery, if there's bad bread mornings."

So they went down-stairs to find Sally, the half-breed cook and maid of all work, mixed Indian and

African, standing up in the middle of her fresh-washed floor in the very neatest of kitchens, and trying to do the honors with a series of rather awkward curtsies, her eyes wide open to inspect her guests. She, too, had heard that a new mistress was coming to that house, and in her way was bound to look her over, and make her own conclusions. So while she kept her mouth shut, the whites of her eyes grew crescent as she watched Helen. Miss Mary, as usual, was speering round after litter and cobwebs; but she was obliged to say at last, "Well, Sally, you take good care of your master here, and everything's as neat as a pin" (her favorite simile for tidiness).

Another curtsy from the half-breed, still eyeing Helen.

"Will de Missus jes' look at dis ere oven? — dis oven jes' gone and done sp'ilt the bread, and I's a'most mad at the way it b'have dis bery morn-in'. Will Missus ples look at dis here bread." And she pulled out from under a very white cloth a big loaf of bread, a trifle burnt, and held it out towards Helen. It has been often noted that dogs and children know who is master in a house; and Sally, in her own way, in this appeal was offering her allegiance to her coming mistress.

So Helen looked at the bread, and tasted a bit of it. "Very good bread, Sally, light and white;

and as to the oven, we'll have that looked after very soon."

Sally made another African curtsey, and subsided. But that very night she broke out in confidence to one of her gossips, as they two were toasting themselves at the kitchen fire.

"I tell you what, honey, dat ole maid 'cross de Common, she come in here dis mornin' smellin' round in my kitchen, and I's rite glad when's she's done gone. But de missus, honey, I's bery glad she's comin'; she says, 'Good bread, Sally,' when I shows her dat burnt lofe the oven sp'iled, jes' like a lady, bless her soul! She's handsomer dan a pink, honey."

The ladies were shown over the whole house. It looked, to Helen, accustomed to quite another style of living, more than a trifle bare and cold; and who could count over the innumerable good intentions which passed through her mind, to reform and warm the same into a better estate of cheerfulness? Before Mr. Ardenne opened his study door to them he said, smiling, "You may do exactly what you please, ladies, with the rest of this house, but I except my library. Every man of spirit should have at least one spot in his own house which he can call his own, and this library is mine. It may be a very inviting field for your labors, but I insist that nobody shall meddle with my books and papers. I say this

because a brother parson of mine down the river has a wife who is always putting things to rights, as she calls it; and so he tells me, with a most rebellious temper, that when he goes for a paper it takes him always half an hour to find it in the one huge pile that his helpmate has made of all his stray writings, calling that order. I must insist on this."

"Is it a den you have got in there," asked Miss Kendrick quite irreverently, "that you are so afraid of us ladies?"

"You can see for yourselves," and they went in. It was a room piled with books, and the papers on the study table were a litter; and Miss Mary's fingers, as she looked round, actually began to move themselves to clear up that literary débris around her. She contented herself with the inner thought that no sensible woman like Helen would ever allow that mantelpiece before her to run to such wildness as it showed at present; and while she and Miss Hannah seated themselves by the cheerful fire to meditate upon the magnitude of the work before them, the rector showed Helen round his library.

"Here I have lived, my dear, these years; and these four walls and I know one another very well. These books, too, are old friends, most of them, and true ones, stately, reverend souls, all a-row on their shelves, who never chide, frown at

me, or hurt. A man with his books is never quite alone; and yet I could read more out of them to-day, Helen, than ever before. Don't you know, it is the sunshine that brings out the colors in a church window, not the night shade?"

"I will try hard to be your sunshine," she answered.

The minister was now obliged to attend a sick call, while the ladies stayed behind in consultation. What plans suggested, and changes of them; even what measurements, and proposed contrasted colors for this and that; what solemn hesitations and perplexities over questions of household thrift and taste, — these all may be left to the memory of those who have known a group of ladies arranging a bride's house before the wedding. Miss Mary, on the spot, would have made a dead-set at the mantel before her; but Helen interfered as the coming mistress, and quieted her rancor against disorder, and her will was acquiesced in. "You will have to do it yourself, then. No woman can live long in this house with a mantel like that."

The evening of the same day, Mr. Ardenne found himself, as usual, at Miss Mary's; and after tea Helen said, "This morning you showed me some of your treasures in your library. Now let me show you a few of mine. The fact is, I wish to ask your advice about something." So, while

Miss Hannah nodded in her chair, she brought out divers boxes and packages, which they two examined together, she interpreting.

“These in this box are my mother’s jewels, which I always carried with me, because I fancied I could recall her as she must have looked in them, — a few diamonds, you see, and cameos, and rings, rubies and emeralds; a trifle out of style, and yet very precious to me as hers. And here are some trifles of my own purchase as I travelled round, — Florentine mosaics, and my little vanities of ornament. I bought them, thinking, perhaps, that one day you might like them. You know a woman always dresses for the one man she loves. Now, do you think all this vanity?”

“Not at all, my dear. I have always held that a woman should make herself as beautiful as she can, just as the flowers do. Beauty is the smile of God everywhere, — not a thing to be proud of (the flowers have no pride), but a thing to be grateful for, and used to make our life purer and better.”

“Then, since I do not weary you, let me show you my laces; though gentlemen, perhaps, are not versed in laces. I am sorry to say that here is a pile of them. They are my passion, at least in dress. They are always so cool, and, pardon me, so passionless and pure — laces are. Maybe you don’t understand that, but a woman does. Look!”

and she brought out a medley of rare old laces, and spread them on the table. "Ah! but you are not looking. I weary you with my chatter."

"I dare say they are very fine; they look so; but how should I know anything about laces?"

"I will teach you, then. Look at this Chantilly lace; see how fine the thread is, and each one of these little loops knotted or tied by human fingers; see what a deal of work goes into it. And now I spread it over this white paper, you see how exquisite the design is."

"A woman might wear a human life, and a weary one at that, — man's or woman's, — over her shoulders at an evening party, then, and not find it very heavy, Helen?"

"Perhaps so — yes — if you choose to see it so. Only these people get bread from the very work I pay for, and my lace may be a token that somebody has been fed."

"Exactly, Helen; your social economy is very good for a woman. But, as you may suppose, my profession does not exactly favor luxury of any sort; that is, except it can be shown that it makes this world better somehow."

The deft lady had been approaching her point with circumspection. So she put away the laces and jewel boxes, and then came to it. "I wish very much to ask you a question. You know how I have been used to live abroad. Tell me

exactly how you want me to live in this parish, as your wife, I mean, — in what style? wear laces and jewels, or not? I very much fear to offend your parish by any style that might show any strong contrast; and yet you know, my dear, — and I am glad to tell you if you don't, — I have a fortune in my own right."

A shadow passed over the face of the man before her, and the brows contracted. He did know that fact; for had not Sir Chauncey told him of it years ago in Chester Close, and seasoned his information with a most bitter taunt?

Helen saw the face, and interpreted it as only a woman can. She laid her hand gently on his arm, and said, "Now, isn't that just a little pride — sheer pride, sir, in you, that is giving pain? Tell me now, sir, like the reasonable man you are, will you take a woman who gives herself to you in marriage, but not her money?"

Helen, whenever she became involved with him in old-time matters, always went back to the respectful term "sir," as had been her wont in childhood.

"There is an old hurt in all this money matter," he said, "which you need not know, at least at present. You had better refer all that to your lawyers."

"But I am my own lawyer, sir, at present, and quite a business woman, — a trunkful of law-

papers are in Miss Mary's garret, — and I mean, in dealing with you, to refer all law questions to my own sweet will. I have trusted you a little, and I mean to do so somewhat more. But you haven't answered my question. How do you wish me to live, as your wife, in this parish?"

"Very much as I live now — simply like a parson's wife. It is against the very soul of our religion for a priest to eat great dinners while the poor starve, or that he or his should wear purple and fine linen while they feel the frost through their rags, or that he should live in a palace when his Master wandered homeless to His cross. So, my dear, we ought to live very plainly."

Mr. Ardenne was a trifle ascetic, maybe, but Helen's heart gave a wise answer. "You shall have it exactly as you please, but yet you will let me wear my laces — and — I thought the *bric-à-brac* in the trunks up-stairs might make the rectory a little more homelike."

"By all means send them over, and arrange to please yourself. Miss Mary seems determined to sweep out my rectory with a new broom, even if it should sweep away the rector also."

Helen laughed outright at the suggested potency of Miss Mary's besom, and confessed that her hostess was the most energetic person she had ever met.

"She has what the Americans call 'faculty,' and in this parish it has been very useful."

The next Sunday there was quite a mob in the church porch to catch a glimpse of Helen as she came out. Most had a tender sympathy for their pastor's affianced wife, tinged, of course, with curiosity. Only a few ancient maidens who mistook their mission rectoryward pronounced her a trifle too stout. But when she went down with Lucy Farewell to the Sunday school below, and quietly took her place to teach a class of big boys, and told them about Florence at Easter-tide, as she had seen it, the good-will towards her did not decrease, especially among the boys.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MARRIAGE.

EASTER had come and gone, and Helen's life had long since ascended from "the Benedictus" of the Hebrew priest to the more gracious "Te Deum" of the whole Church. Certain of its sentences were ringing through all her waking hours:—

"We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.

All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father Everlasting.

To Thee all angels cry aloud, the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.

To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!

Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory.

The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee;

The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee;

The noble army of the Martyrs praise Thee;

The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee.

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine heritage.

Govern them and lift them up forever.

O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.

O Lord, let Thy mercy be upon us, as our trust is in Thee.

O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded."

Nature was waking to a new life in the Easter holidays. The brown tassels of the elms and the red ones of the maples were already out, and the trailing arbutus was hiding its pure, bridal flower-ets, blushing with the sun's kiss, under the sere leaves, the day that Frederick Ardenne and Helen De Vere were wed.

The aged bishop had come down from his city to marry them; and there was to be an Early Communion, since the modern mind is too boisterous to go on its knees in the secular bustle of a wedding service and commemorate Him whose gentle law has given a new sacredness and strength to the marriage bond. So in the early twilight that Sacrament of the Divine Tenderness proceeded in all its ghostly majesty to the "In Excelsis" and the Benediction of Peace. There were just two candles lighted on the altar, for the simple reason

that just then lights could be set in use nowhere else ; and, strange to say, these altar tapers provoked no after-criticisms among folk who forbid that even candles should symbolize a sacred Something on that altar where they hold is nothing !

The wedding itself was very simple and brief, as the Prayer Book makes it. St. Clement's church was filled with an eager and not over-quiet multitude, in which young maidens, with blushes and fans, predominated. There was the usual rush of attention towards the door as the rector and his bride came in alone, and knelt at the rail, and the inevitable flutter of young hearts during the service and after. A brother clergyman gave the bride away ; and when the organ sounded out its gleesome salutation, and the man and wife had left the church, there was the usual crush of best dresses and the medley of a departing crowd.

At a funeral we see the end ; at a wedding only the beginning. Yet at a wedding we make merry always. But which solemnity is the greater !

When the happy couple had gone away on their wedding tour, there was another invasion of the rectory by Miss Mary and her coadjutor, Miss Hannah De Vere. This time the boxes in Miss Mary's garret were emptied into the new home in such profusion as to quite fill the house, which was rummaged and made clean from top to

bottom; and everybody was happy but Sally, the cook.

"Dat ole maid," she said, "has gon' and done used so much water dat I's a'most ded with dis drefful cold; and Massa will have to eat cold cakes a-mornin's, if ole Sally kicks de bucket, jes' bekas dat woman scrubs a hole tro dis kitchen floor."

It was thought by some that Miss Mary had prayed for a rain to wash the very roof. At any rate, there had been a heavy one; and when the groom and his bride came home, the house, inside and out, seemed radiant with its recent bath. The lighted lamps all over the house aided the delusion, if such it was.

Of course Helen met the misfortunes of all recent brides. She forgot to answer to her new name when Mrs. Ardenne was called for, and was provoked to blushes when she wrote her old name in a formal document, with her husband and the town clerk looking on. But upon the whole she sped bravely, as she deserved.

Nor did the new life, on which she now entered, ever run dry of romance. In true wedlock sentiment becomes more chaste and delicate. The poetry after marriage, among the poets at least who marry, is more gentle and sweet than before, whoever may say the contrary. One morning after his marriage, Mr. Ardenne found a package on his desk with a letter on top. The letter was this:—

“You will find, dear husband, with this letter, documents which concern the estate of Sir Chauncey De Vere. I have never told you that he left his estate to me, but under such circumstances that I have never intended to use it as mine. The schedule of the property is with the other papers, and you will see that it is a rather large one. I wish to consult you, if you are willing, how best to use it in any good work which you may advise. Helen.”

So Mr. Ardenne had an interview with his wife in the library. “I need not tell you, my dear,” the latter said, “all the circumstances of Sir Chauncey’s will, nor how I happened to inherit under it, for that would only pain you; but after the way he came between us I should neither be loyal to myself nor you if I used his money personally. To me it would be always blood money. The only way of cleansing it I can think of is to use it in some charity. Will you suggest one?”

The rector meditated. At last he said, “No, Helen, neither of us should touch his money, that is plain. What you suggest is wise. Now, if you will come with me to the window, I will tell you more.” So they two journeyed to the window. “You see that broad hill opposite, across the river. The other side from us it slopes down under orchards into a sunny valley with a brook running

through it. It is rather a large estate, and is now in the market. For years I have coveted that estate, not for myself, but for others. In this parish I am often perplexed to know what to do with little children who, by orphanage or the vices of their parents, are thrown on my hands or the cold charity of the world. The children of the poor have often fine faces, which, as they age, harden into something else, as if their lot degraded their very faces. It is bad enough for grown folk to suffer as they sometimes do; but I always think every child should have its one childhood happy and free from the cark and evil which come to so many, — their one hour of flowers and fun and carelessness. It has been a dream of mine for years to make a home for children, such as I am speaking of, and I have amused myself fancying how I would turn that hill property yonder into such an asylum. I would make it a home with plenty of flowers and outing for the little ones, where they might frolic under the apple blossoms, or fish in the brook, and be happy. I say all this frankly, yet I can't say just at present whether it is best for you to help me fulfil my dream. What do you think?"

Helen, with her arm through his and her head beside his shoulder, looked at the broad hill before them some time in silence, and then quietly said, "I should think it would be a very wise thing to do."

Sir Chauncey's money was to be cleansed, then, somehow, in a bath of charity.

Nor was the new wife without the old wit of wise women in ruling her own domain.

"You do not pay me a visit in my library very often now-a-days, Helen," the rector said, as the former was making him a morning visit.

"No, my dear, I am so afraid of disturbing your papers scattered round your room, with the long dresses we ladies wear. I quite enjoy seeing the very free way you have of ruling your own library without my interference, — quite a curiosity shop, my dear, and I like to come here; only I wouldn't disturb your treasures for the world."

The rector looked up with a smile at the bland lady.

"Do you really think you can improve this room?"

"Not much, my dear; but if you would only allow me to clear a lane, say from my chair, which you set for me, round to your side, and then just a short path to the window where I can look at the hill you bought yesterday for the children's home, I think I could get on famously."

"Well, you can do exactly as you please with your road-making, in *my* room, you know."

So the deft lady made her path round the library, as she said, and somehow its chronic litter had vanished when she had finished.

There was one thing more. "You are so very kind, my dear, this morning, I had almost forgot to tell you what I came in to say, that you are quite welcome to have in your lordship's library that statuette of Victory you admired so much when I unpacked it yesterday. Where shall I put it?"

"Put it on the mantel, I should say. Yes, I would like the statue to look at very much."

"But, my dear, that mantel is in such a state! It would be quite hidden among the piles of pamphlets on it at present."

"Helen, did it ever occur to you that you like, as so many women do, to have your own way sometimes?"

"I can't say it ever did. But since you remind me of it, I think — perhaps — I do."

So Helen had her way with the rector's mantel, and perhaps, in the course of a long and henceforth happy life, also in several other matters. Only it was not Miss Mary Kendrick's way.

CHAPTER XLII.

EDWARD VAUGHN — FINALE.

AND what part had Edward Vaughn in all this festival life in Aubrey Parish? Only that of a sad contrast. He was facing his death in life with the same grimness and in silence. His comfortable establishment ministered what it could, and his old friends came up from the city to mitigate his loneliness. Indeed, there was always some one of them in the house to read and talk to him if he liked, but after all it was worse than lonesome, this life of his. He took it to be erasure of himself, annihilation without that boon of unconsciousness which, as some think, is the one gift which dust and ashes have to bestow.

He had kept run of the wedding and the story which went with it, and had early sent his congratulations to his friend, the rector. The latter had indeed become, of late, a regular visitor at River Nook; and after the wedding had settled itself down to the everyday life of clerical duties, Helen went with him.

"How sad it is," her kind heart said, as they went home, "that so strong a man should suffer so! and he is evidently a gentleman."

“Yes, Helen; the outlook for him is anything but hopeful.” And yet how often in this world are things ordered better than we foresee!

Then after, and as the summer waxed, she and Lucy Farewell often went over together, bringing him flowers, and sometimes reading to him. On such occasions he always insisted that his Sister, of Mercy, as he called Lucy, should take her place, and administer, if it were necessary, his pillows, or bring him his glass of water.

On one of these visits a crisis came to him. He was lying, like the stone statue he seemed to be, motionless and silent, as Lucy came in and was proceeding to bring him a nosegay to inspect, which she had gathered in Miss Kendrick's garden. In doing so she stumbled over a cushion, and the flowers fell on the floor, close beside him. The danger of her falling—an instinct to save, perhaps—some emotion out of his old nature, must have powerfully prompted him to make some effort through his crippled organism to rescue. At any rate, as Lucy raised herself and looked, his right hand and forearm had actually moved themselves, nay, were that instant moving, slowly indeed, but surely, towards her. She looked into his face, surprised. The face was even paler than usual, and the lines of the mouth were set as in strong resolution.

“Why, Edward Vaughn, what has happened?”

she said in almost a cry of fright. Mrs. Ardenne came over from where she was sitting, and looked on.

“Some sort of a change is coming over me — what I can’t say — but it seems to be towards life again. Please be quite still, and let me work out the problem, whatever it be. No, don’t pick up those flowers” (to Lucy, who was reaching after them), “let them lie there; perhaps I can reach them.” So the grim man, resolute, and with teeth hard set, kept on at his arm. Slowly, almost beyond vision, the arm was moving out — down; and the two women, with bated breath, in silence watched the struggle. The great drops on his brow showed his own excitement at his now possible deliverance from his death of stone. “This arm of mine seems stung all over, as if with nettles, and a strange warmth is spreading over me. I am doctor enough to know these are favorable signs — the body trying to go free. Have patience with me, ladies, and let me try hard to live.”

So they watched while he did try. The hand had reached the floor, and was now creeping towards the flowers. It reached them; then the slow fingers crept around them, and the hand held them. Then, in like fashion, the hand came back to the lounge with the nosegay in it. Then a grave smile played round the mouth, which said,

"Here are your flowers, my Sister of Mercy. Don't let them fall again, please."

There was surprise indeed over the whole house as news went out that its master had moved once more. "Pardon me, ladies," he said, "if I disturb your visit, — it isn't every day that a man crawls out of his grave, as I have this afternoon."

"Oh, we are so glad for you!" said both.

"Please call John Walker. Go for the doctor, John."

The doctor came after the ladies were gone.

"Yes," he said, "it looks like recovery. Only there must be great care not to overdo. I hope the muscular system will have vitality enough to recover its tone entirely. We shall see."

The muscles had vitality, and began to live again. From that hour forth he began to mend slowly and surely. In a week's time he was carried out of doors in men's arms, and sat on his own verandah, weak as a child, but an undoubted convalescent. So for weeks and months he was climbing back to life again, and his will came with his health. The doctor prescribed outdoors, and there he was. Some sort of sedan chair was found for him, and his men bore him about his place, and even into the town. Occasionally he was carried on board his yacht, which John Walker sailed down the river. Yet he set no foot on the ground until the late winter.

So Edward Vaughn regathered himself into health again. Years have come and gone since the day he picked up Lucy Farewell's nosegay off his library floor. The only two events in those years which concern our story can be briefly told. The first was when there was a fair held in St. Clement's to help furnish the De Vere home for little children. It had rained all the fair-time; the receipts were small, and the managers mourned. But the last day of the fair the postman brought Mrs. Ardenne a letter in the dreary rain. The only writing inside was, "For the Children's Home;" but there was an enclosure of several large bank-bills. That lady actually turned a little pale with excitement. Then she told Lucy Farewell, who was tending at one of the tables, and they two carried the good news to the rector in his library.

"My dear, some unknown person has sent us money enough to furnish 'the home.'"

Mr. Ardenne counted the money carefully. "This is Mr. Vaughn's work, my dear, I am quite sure, because nobody else in this parish has so much money to give. One way and another he has given a deal of money to the town's poor. I think you ladies had better thank him, and run your risk. He is a little odd, and may surprise you by the way he receives your gratitude, but you had better do it."

Lucy Farewell said nothing; only she remembered a certain Christmas present long ago, and the disgusted way Mr. Vaughn had crammed a white envelope into his pocket on that Christmas Eve.

The two ladies searched out Edward Vaughn, and Mrs. Ardenne proceeded to thank him. But he put on a very icy manner, while his face settled into a most artistic blankness as he said, "I have lived too long in this parish to confess anything, except my faults; and if I should own to this gift somebody would be likely to hand it back, and I should have to repocket the money, mine or not. Miss Farewell, there, can tell you how all that is, if you only ask her. I decline to accept any thanks or admit anything."

Mrs. Ardenne looked from the one to the other perplexed. Lucy answered, to that appeal,

"Oh! that is only a little sarcasm at my expense. I am sure he sent the money, and that we owe him thanks." So the ladies left their thanks, — in the air, perhaps, — and went their ways.

The second event was very much later on, and a trifle personal. Mrs. Ardenne, in her parlor, late one afternoon, was surprised by Lucy Farewell's hurried entrance. She looked up from her embroidery to see that her usually placid face was full of distress.

“Why, Lucy, what is the matter?”

But the latter, saying nothing, came and laid her head in that matron's lap, trembling violently, and sobbing. Even so placid a woman as she was doing that! The elder lady waited and soothed till the distress calmed. Then she repeated her question.

“Mr. Vaughn has just asked me to be his wife.”

“Oh! is that all? That is not such a terrible thing, after all, is it? Come, now, tell me just how it happened.”

So after a while, and some more gentle coaxing, Lucy told her about as much as women usually relate of their supreme moments in joy or sorrow.

“He came into my schoolroom after hours, and very bluntly, as his way is, you know, asked me to be his wife.”

“And what did you do, my dear?”

“I told him that I could not be.”

“With equal bluntness, yet with a woman's tone, you told him that, you silly girl, did you?”

“Yes.”

“And don't you love him? Girls don't usually distress themselves over the man they hate.”

“No, Mrs. Ardenne, I am sure I don't, — at least, not as I ought to love the man I marry. He always frightens me; I am afraid of him. He is so moody — he gives me so many sides of himself — he is such a riddle! He is worse than ‘Blue

Beard ; ’ ’ and she laughed hysterically at her own emphatic witticism.

“ Besides,” she went on, “ I am only a poor teacher in a parish school. Why should he marry me, or why should I become a wife in a house like his? I should marry quite out of my station.”

“ Sheer pride, my dear, under a veil of humility. If you are a genuine woman, as I know you are, what station, pray, is above that? No, you poor child ; I am sure you will marry Edward Vaughn and ‘ be happy,’ as the story books read, ‘ forever after.’ What you want now is a good night’s sleep, and your own common sense to guide you, and you will see things as they are. Your heart is all right now, only a little clouded by your excited brain. I expect to be invited to the wedding.” At which both laughed.

And Edward Vaughn did marry Lucy Farewell—late, to be sure, and after many and curious vicissitudes. And what is more, they are living this day at River Nook, and happy after that singular fashion which his nature allows. He always says that his wife married him to get rid of him, or as a sort of indoor pensioner of hers, or as one of the parish poor whom a Sister of Charity is bound to own. She, on her part, says that it is still a mystery to her how she ever came to marry him, but, as she took him for better or worse, she

has certainly found him better. Edward Vaughn is still no saint, nor ever will be. Yet he goes to church with gravity, and has still silver for the poor. His better nature is always breaking through the rifts of that crust of a past life, which, without the teeth of the iron trap which once held fast his body, still restrains the mobility of his undoubted virtues. The hand with which he plucked fruit, good and evil, from the tree of life, is scarred; yet is it an open hand, which never strikes false, or holds back from his friends. Lucy is never quite sure but there is a caged tiger somewhere about him, though she has never seen it, or felt its claws. She herself has been casting her bread upon the waters, and, as the years lapse, it is coming back to her in a full feast.

Yet he is let have his own way in his own house. For instance, the first Monday morning in every month, Mrs. Vaughn will come down in the very neatest of matron's caps to breakfast. Then she will expect to find something under her plate, and proceeds to look for it. It is a white envelope addressed to "Lucy Farewell." In it are new bank-bills — occasionally, when she has a fresh charity on hand, some large ones.

Then the broad-shouldered, silent man at the other end of the table also expects. She will put the envelope and its enclosure deeper down into the pocket of her morning-dress than ever

her hands went down one Christmas Eve into her muff, as she held her maidenly altercation in the Christmas snows. Then the white cap will go over to the man, and the lips under will give the broad, expectant forehead just three wifely kisses. At such times he will say nothing except what a grim smile over the whole face says to Lucy, who can interpret. Only once she gave its meaning: "You are thinking, my dear, that I am very ready to take your money now. Well, I am — and you too."

"Perhaps."

He has his own way of surprises. Shortly after their marriage in St. Clement's he said, "Please bring me, if you will, the 'Reineke Fuchs' of Goethe with Kaulbach's illustrations, on the shelf yonder — that book bound in red Russia morocco. I wish to show you something."

So the book is brought, and opened to a page where there appears a medley of pressed, withered flowers.

"Do you know those flowers, Lucy?"

"No; how should I?"

"Well, they are violets which a Sister of Mercy brought me once when I lay in my stone death on that lounge yonder. Do you remember them now?"

There was only a very gentle kiss for answer.

Surprises, too, come to him. Only last week a

very little girl on his knee at the dessert, rum-maging round at her father's watch-chain, made a discovery.

"O papa! you have got no little finger on your hand, as I have; you have only four. Where is it, papa?"

Papa's face grows grim again, and a shadow is covering.

"I lost that finger, my child, in the river once, breaking ice for your mamma. She will tell you."

So the little girl slides down from the lap, and goes over to mamma.

"Yes, my child, when you are old enough, I will tell you how your big papa yonder once saved your mother's life in the river, when the winter was very cold."

And the rest of Aubrey folk who have appeared in this story? Those of them who are not dead are going on as ever with the clangor of the mill-wheels every day, and the stars looking down every night upon a life which is so everyday, and yet, after all, so strange.

It is the fashion of to-day, on its agnostic and material side, to sneer at sentiment as an offence in art. Yet what is art but its expression? What bloom is to flowers, the purple juice to the grapes, the blush of sunset to the skies, the red blood in our heart-valves to the body, that is senti-

ment to human life, which without it is a mere skeleton of shrivelled nerves and sinews.

Again, in a cognate criticism, men are denying that supreme tragedies are everywhere evolving themselves out of the dry statistics of our modern civilization. But the fact is, that tragedy was never more multiform and sober than now and here. While the heart fires of our age receive a new energy from its strangely developed intellect; while a new generation out of the old manger goes forth with its human passions to taste of its tree of life; while black robes follow bridal veils, and wreaths wither in the coffin of buried joys; while men go down to the sea in ships, and women on the shore watch in vain for their returning sails; while men waste in the red battle, and women kneel at the hearthstone with prayers for the slain,—so long will the tragedy in common life, statelier than King Lear, confront the wise, and Hamlet be only a hint of what lies cold and stark with Ophelia under the willows—or of those darker passions which coldly furnish forth the marriage table with funeral meats, and sleep at last under the circlet of Yorick's skull in the mould.

So the life in Aubrey Parish, herein described, vindicates its right to this present history. That life repeats itself to-morrow somewhere else, in a new guise, but with the same old soul of a race

supreme. It is always a life opening out into a mystery unsearchable, and to the wise, at least, demands another life to interpret and fulfil the present. Aubrey folk, like their neighbors, "have that within which passeth show" or writing down. They inherit, like the rest of us, what to those who walk by sight is the riddle of life. That is still the Sphinx in Aubrey Parish, and Aubrey Parish is everywhere.

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
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